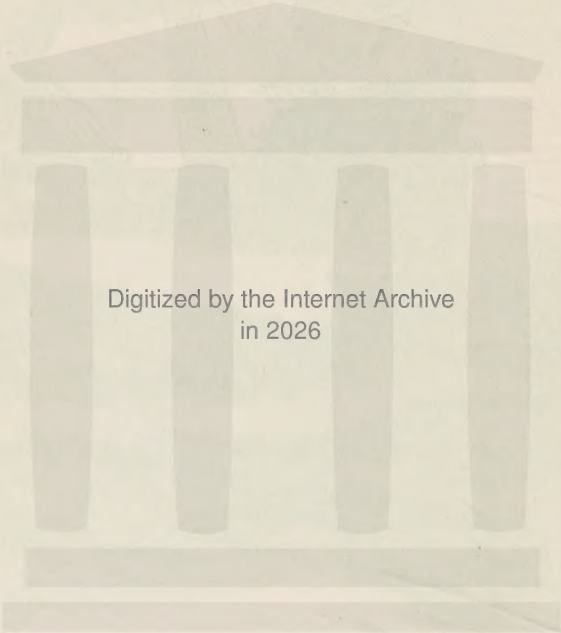
THE SONG OF
THREE FRIENDS
—
THE SONG OF
HUGH GLASS
BY
JOHN G.
NEIHARDT



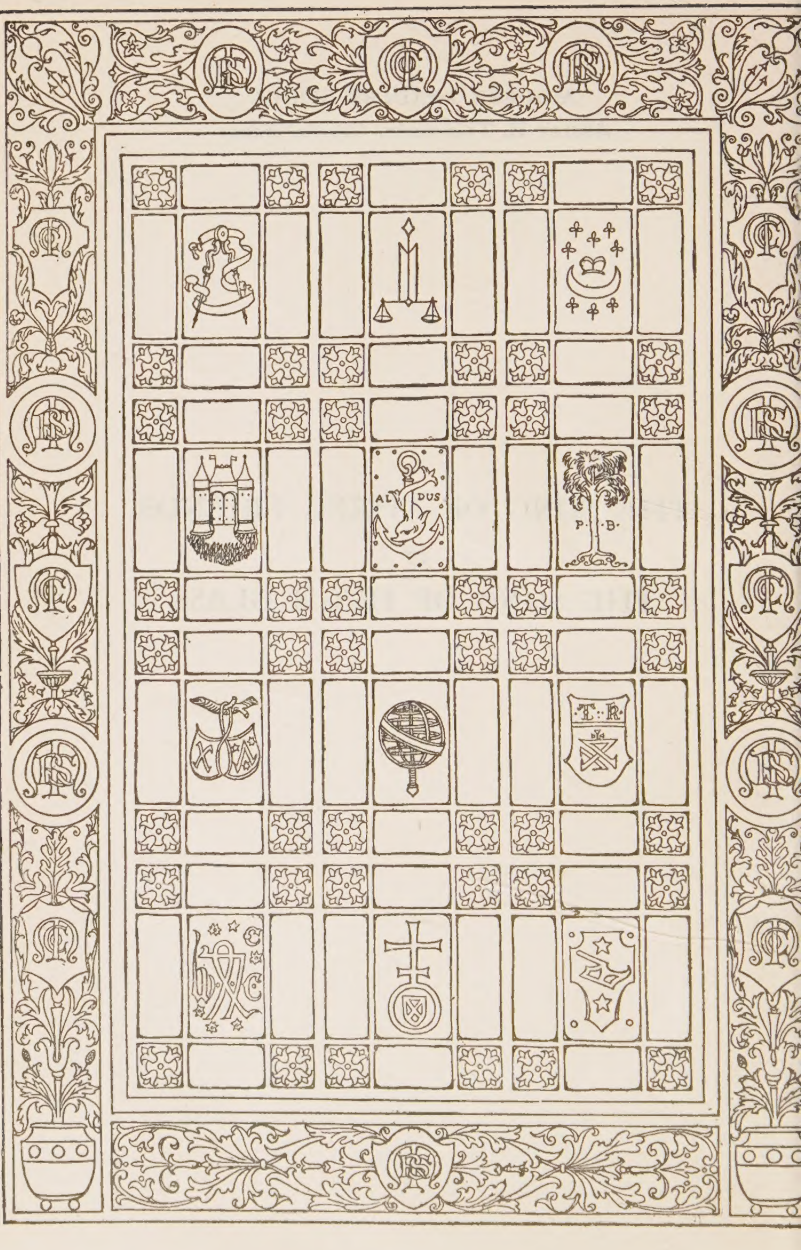
Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/songofthreefrien0000john_i5j6

MODERN READERS' SERIES

ASHLEY H. THORNDIKE, *General Editor*

THE SONG OF THREE FRIENDS
&
THE SONG OF HUGH GLASS


AL
DUS
P·
B·
T·R

THE SONG OF THREE FRIENDS

and

THE SONG OF HUGH GLASS

By

JOHN G. NEIHARDT

New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1928

All rights reserved

THE MODERN READERS' SERIES

COPYRIGHT, 1915, 1919, 1924,
BY THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

Set up and electrotyped. Modern Readers' Series edition, published May, 1924. Reprinted January, 1926; January, 1927; January, 1928.

Printed in the United States of America by
STRATFORD PRESS, INC.

NOTE TO THE SONG OF THREE FRIENDS

THE following narrative, though complete in itself, is designed to be the first piece in a cycle of poems dealing with the fur trade period of the Trans-Missouri region. "The Song of Hugh Glass," which was published in the fall of 1915, is the second in the series.

The four decades during which the fur trade flourished west of the Missouri River may be regarded as a typical heroic period, differing in no essential from the many other great heroic periods that have made glorious the story of the Aryan migration. Jane Harrison says that heroic characters do not arise from any peculiarity of race or even of geographical surroundings; but that, given certain social conditions, they may and do appear anywhere and at any time. The heroic spirit, as seen in heroic poetry, we are told, is the outcome of a society cut loose from its roots, of a time of migrations, of the shifting of populations. Such conditions are to be found during the time of the Spanish conquests of Central and

South America; and they are to be found also in those wonderful years of our own West, when wandering bands of trappers were exploring the rivers and the mountains and the plains and the deserts from the British possessions to Mexico, and from the Missouri to the Pacific.

As a result of our individualistic tendencies, our numerous jostling nationalities, and our materialistic temper, we Americans are prone to regard the Past as being separated from us as by an insurmountable wall. We lack the sense of racial continuity. For us it is almost as though the world began yesterday morning; and too much of our contemporary literature is based upon that view. The affairs of antiquity seem to the generality of us to be as remote as the dimmest star, and as little related to our activities. But what we call the slow lapse of ages is really only the blinking of an eye. Sometimes this sense of the close unity of all time and all human experience has come upon me so strongly that I have felt, for an intense moment, how just a little hurry on my part might get me there in time to hear Æschylus training a Chorus, or to see the wizard chisel still busy with the Parthenon frieze, or to hear Socrates telling his dreams to his judges. It is in some such mood that I ap-

proach that body of precious saga-stuff which I have called the Western American Epos; and I see it, not as a thing in itself, but rather as one phase of the whole race life from the beginning; indeed, the final link in that long chain of heroic periods stretching from the region of the Euphrates eastward into India and westward to our own Pacific Coast.

Like causes produce like effects; and as we follow the Aryan migration, we find that, over and over again, heroic periods occur; and out of each period have grown epic and saga, celebrating the deeds of the heroes. In India we find the Mahabharata and Ramayana; in Persia, the Shah Nameh; among the Greeks, the Homeric poems; in Rome, the Æneid; in Germany, the Niebelungenlied; in France, the Chanson de Roland; in the Scandinavian countries, the sagas and the Eddaic poems; in the British Isles, the Arthurian and Cuchulain cycles. The Race crosses the Atlantic, and the last lap of the long westward journey is begun. Still another typical heroic period develops; and where shall we find its epic? Certainly not in Hiawatha, which is not concerned with our race, and but little with the real American Indian, for that matter. Certainly not in Evangeline, which is typical neither in

matter nor manner. Nor is it likely ever to be written on a theme concerned with the original Colonies, for the reason that in the Colonies society was never cut loose from its roots. The true American Epos was developed between the Missouri River and the Pacific Ocean in approximately the first four decades of the 19th century. When the settlers began to cross the Missouri, the end of the epic period was in sight.

As has been the case with all similar periods, a great body of legend, concerned with heroic deeds, grew up about those men who explored that vast wilderness in search of furs. These stories, which formerly circulated throughout the West as oral tradition, are now, in the main, known only to specialists in Western history; for they are to be found chiefly in contemporary journals and books of travel long since out of print and difficult to obtain. Any one who has taken the trouble to explore that spacious and comparatively little known field of American history will be likely to believe with me that the heroes of that time were the direct descendants, in the epic line, of all the heroes of the race that have been celebrated in song and saga.

It would seem that we are now entering upon a period in which such a work as I propose might

logically be written, if we are to accept the theory of George Edward Woodberry. He tells us that those literary works which embody representative epochs appear upon what he terms "watersheds of history"; that is to say, at those times when an old order is passing away, when men look forward hopefully or fearfully to new things, and backward a little wistfully to things that have been. That is the state of the modern world. We are experiencing the wane of individualism; we are beginning to think in terms of the group; and already reactionary voices are being raised in defence of the good old days when a man could do as it pleased him to do. And if we seek for that moment in our national life when individualism was most pronounced, we shall find it in the romantic period with which I am concerned; for in that time society did not exist in the Trans-Missouri country, and there was no law but the whim of the daring and the strong.

Obviously, in attempting to embody such a period in a literary work, it is necessary to concentrate upon one representative portion of it. Fortunately, this can be done without sacrifice and without resorting to fictitious means. The story of the two expeditions that ascended the Missouri River under the leadership of Ashley

and Henry of St. Louis in the years 1822 and 1823, comprehends every phase of the life of the epoch and covers the entire Trans-Missouri region from the British boundaries to Santa Fé, and from St. Louis to the Spanish Settlements of California. Furthermore, of all the bands of trappers and traders that entered the wilderness during those years, none experienced so many extraordinary adventures as did the Ashley-Henry men. The story of their exploits and wanderings constitutes what I would call the Ashley-Henry Saga; and it is upon this that I am basing my cycle.

The first printed version of the present story is to be found in the files of a short-lived periodical known as *The Western Souvenir*, from which it was copied by the *Western Monthly Review* for July, 1829. *The Missouri Intelligencer* for September 4, 1829, and Howe's "Historical Collections of the Great West" contain practically the same version of the tale. A matter-of-fact reference to the episode is made on page 298 of the Letter Book of the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, now among the manuscripts of the Kansas Historical Society at Topeka.

I wish to express a sense of obligation to Mr. Doane Robinson, Secretary of the State His-

torical Society of South Dakota, for placing his wide knowledge of Western history at my disposal.

NOTE TO THE SONG OF HUGH GLASS

The following narrative is based upon an episode taken from that much neglected portion of our history, the era of the American Fur Trade. My interest in that period may be said to have begun at the age of six when, clinging to the forefinger of my father, I discovered the Missouri River from a bluff top at Kansas City. It was flood time, and the impression I received was deep and lasting. Even now I cannot think of that stream without a thrill of awe and something of the reverence one feels for mighty things. It was for me what the sea must have been to the Greek boys of antiquity. And as those ancient boys must have been eager to hear of perils nobly encountered on the deep and in the lands adjacent, so was I eager to learn of the heroes who had travelled my river as an imperial road. Nor was I disappointed in what I learned of them; for they seemed to me in every way equal to the heroes of old. I came to think of them with a sense of personal ownership, for any one of many of them

might have been my grandfather — and so a little of their purple fell on me. As I grew older and came to possess more of my inheritance, I began to see that what had enthralled me was, in fact, of the stuff of sagas, a genuine epic cycle in the rough. Furthermore, I realized that this raw material had been undergoing a process of digestion in my consciousness, corresponding in a way to the process of infinite repetition and fond elaboration which, as certain scholars tell us, foreran the heroic narratives of old time.

I decided that some day I would begin to tell these hero tales in verse; and in 1908, as a preparation for what I had in mind, I descended the Missouri in an open boat, and also ascended the Yellowstone for a considerable distance. On the upper river the country was practically unchanged; and for one familiar with what had taken place there, it was no difficult feat of the imagination to revive the details of that time — the men, the trails, the boats, the trading posts where veritable satraps once ruled under the sway of the American Fur Company.

The Hugh Glass episode is to be found in Chittenden's "History of the American Fur Trade" where it is quoted from three principal sources: the *Missouri Intelligencer*, Sage's "Scenes in the

Rocky Mountains," and Cooke's "Scenes in the United States Army." The present narrative begins after that military fiasco known as the Leavenworth Campaign against the Aricaras, which took place near the mouth of the Grand River in what is now South Dakota.

1915 J. G. N.

CONTENTS

PAGE

INTRODUCTION xvii

THE SONG OF THREE FRIENDS

I. Ashley's Hundred 1
II. The Up-Stream Men 4
III. To the Musselshell 29
IV. The Net Is Cast 39
V. The Quarrel 50
VI. The Shooting of the Cup 70
VII. The Third Rider 88
VIII. Vengeance 108

THE SONG OF HUGH GLASS

I. Graybeard and Goldhair 129
II. The Awakening 154
III. The Crawl 165
IV. The Return of the Ghost 222
V. Jamie 237

INTRODUCTION

If the average student of Western American History in our schools were asked to recall those names which loom large for him during the four decades from the purchase of the Louisiana Territory to the coming of the settlers, he would doubtless think of Lewis and Clark, Lieutenant Pike, Major Long, and General Frémont, with perhaps one or two others. That is to say, the average student of Western History is familiar with the names of official explorers; and but for their exploits, those forty wonderful years would seem to him little more than a lapse of empty time in a vast region waiting for the westering white man.

It is true that the deeds of those above named were important. The journey of Lewis and Clark from St. Louis to the mouth of the Columbia, and back again, has immense significance in the story of our national life, and it was truly a "magnificent adventure," to use the phrase of Emerson Hough. Pike holds and deserves a high place for his explorations in the Southwest. Long's contribution to the early knowledge of the West was considerable; and Frémont's expeditions served, at least, to awaken the popular Eastern mind to the great possibilities of the Trans-Missouri region. Frémont's reputation, how-

ever, is out of all proportion to his real accomplishment, for the trails he travelled were well known to white men long before he ventured into the wilderness. In this connection, Major Chittenden, one of the foremost authorities on the subject, tells us that "there never has been a time until very recently when the geography of the West was so thoroughly understood as it was by the trader and trapper from 1830 to 1840."

When Lewis and Clark were descending the Missouri River in the summer of 1806 on their return from the mouth of the Columbia, they met bands of traders pushing on toward the country from whence the explorers had just come. These were the vanguard of the real history makers of the early West. It was such men as these who, during the next generation, as Chittenden says, "first explored and established the routes of travel which are now and always will be the avenues of commerce in that region." The period that followed the return of Lewis and Clark was one of the most enthralling in the entire story of the human race, and yet the very names of its principal heroes are practically unknown except to specialists in Western History. The stories of their exploits have not yet reached our schools, and are to be found, for the most part, hidden away in the collections of state historical societies and in contemporary journals and books of travel long since out of print. The Mormon

Emigration, the Mexican War, the Gold Rush to California, and the Oregon Question filled the popular imagination during the early years of the West, and thus an important phase of our national development was overlooked and forgotten.

Nevertheless, it remains true that the story of the West during the first four decades of the nineteenth century is the story of the wandering bands of trappers and traders who explored the wilderness in search of furs from the British boundary to Mexico and from the Missouri to the Pacific. History, as written in the past, has been too much a chronological record of official governmental acts, too little an intimate account of the lives of the people themselves. Doubtless, the democratic spirit that now seems to be sweeping the world will, if it continues to spread, revolutionize our whole conception of history, bringing us to realize that the glory of the race is not the glory of a chosen few, but that it radiates from the precious heroic stuff of common human lives. And that view, I am proud to say, is quite in keeping with our dearest national traditions.

Now the fur trade on the Missouri River dates well back into the eighteenth century, and at the time of the Revolutionary War, parties of trappers had already ascended as far north as the Big Bend in the present state of South Dakota. But it was not until

after the return of Lewis and Clark from the Northwest, and of Lieutenant Pike from the Southwest, that the great era of the fur trade began. In 1807 the Spanish trader, Manuel Lisa, ascended the Missouri and the Yellowstone to the mouth of the Big Horn, where he erected a trading post. Returning to St. Louis the next year, he became the leading spirit in the "St. Louis Missouri Fur Company," the troubled career of which, during the succeeding fifteen years, was rich in the stuff of which epics are made. Major Andrew Henry, who appears in the two poems here presented, was a member of that company, ascending the Missouri to the Three Forks in the summer of 1809. Driven thence by the Blackfeet, he crossed the Great Divide and built a post on what has since been called Henry's fork of the Snake River, thus being the first American trader to operate on the Pacific side of the Rockies.

In the spring of 1811, the Overland Astorians, under the command of W. P. Hunt, left St. Louis, bound for the mouth of the Columbia where they expected to join forces with a sea expedition that had set sail from New York during the previous autumn for the long and hazardous voyage around Cape Horn. This is the only widely known expedition in the whole history of the Trans-Missouri fur trade, thanks to Washington Irving, whose account of it is an American classic.

During the War of 1812 the fur trade on the Missouri declined; and though in the year 1819 five companies of some importance were operating from St. Louis, none of these was doing a profitable business. The revival of the trade, which ushered in the great epic period of our national development, may be dated from March 20th, 1822, when the following advertisement appeared in the *Missouri Republican* of St. Louis:

> To Enterprising Young Men:
>
> The subscriber wishes to engage one hundred young men to ascend the Missouri River to its source, there to be employed for one, two or three years. For particulars enquire of Major Andrew Henry, near the lead mines in the County of Washington, who will ascend with and command the party; or of the subscriber near St. Louis.
>
> (Signed) WILLIAM H. ASHLEY.

Major Henry has already been mentioned as a veteran trader of the upper country. Ashley, who was at that time General of the Missouri Militia and Lieutenant Governor of the recently admitted state, was about to make his first trip into the wilderness.

In the spring of 1822, Major Henry, with his one hundred "enterprising young men" (some of whom were young only in spirit), began his ascent to the mouth of the Yellowstone, which is described in "The Song of Three Friends." This was before the era of the Missouri River steamboat, and the two keelboats, that bore the trading stock and supplies of the party, were

"cordelled," that is to say, pulled by tow-line. General Ashley accompanied the expedition, returning to St. Louis in the fall. Early in the spring of 1823 he started north again with a second band of one hundred men. Stopping to trade for horses at the Ree villages near the mouth of the Grand, he was attacked by that most treacherous of the Missouri River tribes, received a sound drubbing, lost most of his horses, and was compelled to drop down stream to await reënforcements. It was in this battle that old Hugh Glass received his hip wound.

Jedediah Smith, who was a member of the defeated party, and who had fought with conspicuous bravery, volunteered to carry the news of disaster to Henry at the mouth of the Yellowstone. He was then but twenty-four years old; yet during the next six years he was destined to discover and explore the central and southwestern routes to the Pacific — an achievement of equal importance with that of Lewis and Clark, and performed under much greater difficulties. Immediately upon the arrival of Smith at the mouth of the Yellowstone, Henry, with most of his band, started south to the relief of Ashley.

In the meanwhile, Ashley had apprised the Indian Agent and military authorities at Fort Atkinson of his rough treatment; and Colonel Leavenworth started north with 220 men, intent upon chastising the Rees

and making the Missouri River safe for American traders. The campaign that followed, in which the Whites were aided by a band of Sioux, was in some important respects a fiasco, as the opening lines of "The Song of Hugh Glass" suggest. But that does not greatly matter here.

What does matter, is the fact that the muster roll of the two parties of Ashley and Henry, then united at the mouth of the Grand, contained nearly all of the great names in the history of the West from the time of Lewis and Clark to the coming of the settlers. Harrison Clifford Dale, whose "Ashley-Smith Explorations to the Pacific" easily ranks him as the supreme authority on this particular period, has the following to say regarding the Ashley-Henry men: "The wanderings of this group during the next ten or fifteen years cover the entire West. . . . It was the most significant group of continental explorers ever brought together."

After the Leavenworth campaign against the Rees, Major Henry, with eighty men, set out for the mouth of the Big Horn by way of the Grand River valley. Hugh Glass acted as hunter for the westbound party, and it is at this point that "The Song of Hugh Glass" begins. Old Glass was not himself an explorer, yet his adventures serve to illustrate the heroic temper of the men who explored the West, as well as the nature of the difficulties they encountered.

In building the epic cycle, of which "The Song of Hugh Glass" and "The Song of Three Friends" are parts (each, however, being complete in itself), I am concerned with the wanderings of that group of men who were assembled for the last time at the mouth of the Grand, and with the deeds of those other heroes who in later years carried on the great tradition to a glorious consummation. Long ago, when I was younger than most of you who are now about to study the poems here presented, I dreamed of making those men live again for the young men and women of my country. The tremendous mood of heroism that was developed in our American West during that period is properly a part of your racial inheritance; and certainly no less important a part than the memory of ancient heroes. Indeed, it can be shown that those men — Kentuckians, Virginians, Pennsylvanians, Ohioans — were direct descendants, in the epic line, of all the heroes of our Aryan stock that have been celebrated by the poets of the Past; descendants of Achilles and Hector, of Æneas, of Roland, of Sigurd, and of the knights of Arthur's court. They went as torch-bearers in the van of our westering civilization. Your Present is, in a great measure, a heritage from their Past.

And their blood is in your veins!

John G. Neihardt.

THE SONG OF THREE FRIENDS

TO HILDA

Οἷον τὸ γλυκύμαλον ἐρεύθεται ἄκρῳ ἐπ᾽ ὕσδῳ
ἄκρον ἐπ᾽ ἀκροτάτῳ· λελάθοντο δὲ μαλοδρόπηες,
οὐ μὰν ἐκλελαθοντ᾽, αλλ᾽ οὐκ εδύναντ᾽ ἐπίκεσθαι.

THE SONG OF THREE FRIENDS

I

ASHLEY'S HUNDRED

Who now reads clear the roster of that band?
Alas, Time scribbles with a careless hand
And often pinchbeck doings from that pen
Bite deep, where deeds and dooms of mighty men
Are blotted out beneath a sordid scrawl!

One hundred strong they flocked to Ashley's call
That spring of eighteen hundred twenty-two;
For tales of wealth, out-legending Peru,
Came wind-blown from Missouri's distant springs,
And that old sireny of unknown things
Bewitched them, and they could not linger more.
They heard the song the sea winds sang the shore
When earth was flat, and black ships dared the steep
Where bloomed the purple perils of the deep
In dragon-haunted gardens. They were young.

Albeit some might feel the winter flung
Upon their heads, 'twas less like autumn's drift
Than backward April's unregarded sift
On stout oaks thrilling with the sap again.
And some had scarce attained the height of men,
Their lips unroughed, and gleaming in their eyes
The light of immemorial surprise
That life still kept the spaciousness of old
And, like the hoarded tales their grandsires told,
Might still run bravely.

For a little span
Their life-fires flared like torches in the van
Of westward progress, ere the great wind 'woke
To snuff them. Many vanished like a smoke
The blue air drinks; and e'en of those who burned
Down to the socket, scarce a tithe returned
To share at last the ways of quiet men,
Or see the hearth-reek drifting once again
Across the roofs of old St. Louis town.

And now no more the mackinaws come down,
Their gunwales low with costly packs and bales,
A wind of wonder in their shabby sails,
Their homing oars flung rhythmic to the tide;
And nevermore the masted keelboats ride
Missouri's stubborn waters on the lone
Long zigzag journey to the Yellowstone.

Their hulks have found the harbor ways that know
The ships of all the Sagas, long ago —
A moony haven where no loud gale stirs.
The trappers and the singing *voyageurs*
Are comrades now of Jason and his crew,
Foregathered in that timeless rendezvous
Where come at last all seekers of the Fleece.

Not now of those who, dying, dropped in peace
A brimming cup of years the song shall be:
From Mississippi to the Western Sea,
From Britain's country to the Rio Grande
Their names are written deep across the land
In pass and trail and river, like a rune.

Pore long upon that roster by the moon
Of things remembered dimly. Tangled, blear
The writing runs; yet presently appear
Three names of men that, spoken, somehow seem
Incantatory trumpets of a dream
Obscurely blowing from the hinter-gloom.
Of these and that inexorable doom
That followed like a hound upon the scent,
Here runs the tale.

II

THE UP-STREAM MEN

When Major Henry went
Up river at the head of Ashley's band,
Already there were robins in the land.
Home-keeping men were following the plows
And through the smoke-thin greenery of boughs
The scattering wild-fire of the fruit bloom ran.

Behold them starting northward, if you can.
Dawn flares across the Mississippi's tide;
A tumult runs along the waterside
Where, scenting an event, St. Louis throngs.
Above the buzzling voices soar the songs
Of waiting boatmen — lilting *chansonettes*
Whereof the meaning laughs, the music frets,
Nigh weeping that such gladness can not stay.
In turn, the herded horses snort and neigh
Like panic bugles. Up the gangplanks poured,
Go streams of trappers, rushing goods aboard
The snub-built keelboats, squat with seeming sloth —
Baled three-point blankets, blue and scarlet cloth,

Rum, powder, flour, guns, gauderies and lead.
And all about, goodbyes are being said.
Gauche girls with rainy April in their gaze
Cling to their beardless heroes, count the days
Between this parting and the wedding morn,
Unwitting how unhuman Fate may scorn
The youngling dream. For O how many a lad
Would see the face of Danger, and go mad
With her weird vixen beauty; aye, forget
This girl's face, yearning upward now and wet,
Half woman's with the first vague guess at woe!

And now commands are bellowed, boat horns
blow
Haughtily in the dawn; the tumult swells.
The tow-crews, shouldering the long cordelles
Slack from the mastheads, lean upon the sag.
The keelboats answer lazily and drag
Their blunt prows slowly in the gilded tide.
A steersman sings, and up the riverside
The gay contagious ditty spreads and runs
Above the shouts, the uproar of the guns,
The nickering of horses.

So, they say,
Went forth a hundred singing men that day;
And girlish April went ahead of them.
The music of her trailing garment's hem

Seemed scarce a league ahead. A little speed
Might yet almost surprise her in the deed
Of sorcery; for, ever as they strove,
A gray-green smudge in every poplar grove
Proclaimed the recent kindling. Aye, it seemed
That bird and bush and tree had only dreamed
Of song and leaf and blossom, till they heard
The young men's feet; when tree and bush and
bird
Unleashed the whole conspiracy of awe!
Pale green was every slough about the Kaw;
About the Platte, pale green was every slough;
And still the pale green lingered at the Sioux,
So close they trailed the marching of the South.
But when they reached the Niobrara's mouth
The witchery of spring had taken flight
And, like a girl grown woman over night,
Young summer glowed.

And now the river rose,
Gigantic from a feast of northern snows,
And mightily the snub prows felt the tide;
But with the loud, sail-filling South allied,
The tow-crews battled gaily day by day;
And seldom lulled the struggle on the way
But some light jest availed to fling along
The panting lines the laughter of the strong,

For joy sleeps lightly in the hero's mood.
And when the sky-wide prairie solitude
Was darkened round them, and the camp was set
Secure for well-earned sleep that came not yet,
What stories shaped for marvel or for mirth! —
Tales fit to strain the supper-tightened girth,
Looped yarns, wherein the veteran spinners vied
To color with a lie more glorified
Some thread that had veracity enough,
Spun straightway out of life's own precious stuff
That each had scutched and heckled in the raw.
Then thinner grew each subsequent guffaw
While drowsily the story went the rounds
And o'er the velvet dark the summer sounds
Prevailed in weird crescendo more and more,
Until the story-teller with a snore
Gave over to a dream a tale half told.

And now the horse-guards, while the night grows old,
With intermittent singing buffet sleep
That surges subtly down the starry deep
On waves of odor from the manless miles
Of summer-haunted prairie. Now, at whiles,
The kiote's mordant clamor cleaves the drowse.
The horses stamp and blow; about the prows

Dark waters chug and gurgle; as with looms
Bugs weave a drone; a beaver's diving booms,
Whereat bluffs grumble in their sable cowls.
The devil laughter of the prairie owls
Mocks mirth anon, like unrepentant sin.
Perceptibly at last slow hours wear thin
The east, until the prairie stares with morn,
And horses nicker to the boatman's horn
That blares the music of a day begun.

So through the days of thunder and of sun
They pressed to northward. Now the river shrank,
The grass turned yellow and the men were lank
And gnarled with labor. Smooth-lipped lads matured
'Twixt moon and moon with all that they endured,
Their faces leathered by the wind and glare,
Their eyes grown ageless with the calm far stare
Of men who know the prairies or the seas.
And when they reached the village of the Rees,
One scarce might say, This man is young, this old,
Save for the beard.

Here loitered days of gold
And days of leisure, welcome to the crews;
For recently had come the wondrous news
Of beaver-haunts beyond the Great Divide —
So rich a tale 'twould seem the tellers lied,
Had they not much fine peltry to attest.
So now the far off River of the West
Became the goal of venture for the band;
And since the farther trail lay overland
From where the Great Falls thundered to no ear,
They paused awhile to buy more ponies here
With powder, liquor, gauds and wily words.
A horse-fond people, opulent in herds,
The Rees were; and the trade was very good.

Now camped along the river-fringing wood,
Three sullen, thunder-brewing, rainless days,
Those weathered men made merry in their ways
With tipple, euchre, story, jest and song.
The marksmen matched their cleverness; the strong
Wrestled the strong; and brawling pugilists
Displayed the boasted power of their fists
In stubborn yet half amicable fights.
And whisky went hell-roaring through the nights

Among the lodges of the fuddled Rees.
Thus merrily the trappers took their ease,
Rejoicing in the thread that Clotho spun;
For it was good to feel the bright thread run,
However eager for the snipping shears.

O joy long stifled in the ruck of years!
How many came to strange and bitter ends!
And who was merrier than those three friends
Whom here a song remembers for their woe?

Will Carpenter, Mike Fink and Frank Talbeau
Were they — each gotten of a doughty breed;
For in the blood of them the ancient seed
Of Saxon, Celt and Norman grew again.
The Mississippi reared no finer men,
And rarely the Ohio knew their peers
For pluck and prowess — even in those years
When stern life yielded suck but to the strong.
Nor in the hundred Henry took along
Was found their match — and each man knew it
well.
For instance, when it suited Mike to tell
A tale that called for laughter, as he thought,
The hearer laughed right heartily, or fought
And took a drubbing. Then, if more complained,
Those three lacked not for logic that explained

The situation in no doubtful way.
"Me jokes are always funny" Mike would say;
And most men freely granted that they were.

A lanky, rangy man was Carpenter,
Quite six feet two from naked heel to crown;
And, though crow-lean, he brought the steelyard down
With twice a hundred notched upon the bar.
Nor was he stooped, as tall men often are;
A cedar of a man, he towered straight.
One might have judged him lumbering of gait,
When he was still; but when he walked or ran,
He stepped it lightly like a little man —
And such a one is very good to see.
Not his the tongue for quip or repartee;
His wit seemed slow; and something of the child
Came o'er his rough-hewn features, when he smiled,
To mock the porching brow and eagle nose.
'Twas when he fought the true import of those
Grew clear, though even then his mien deceived;
For less in wrath, he seemed, than mildly grieved —
Which made his blows no whit less true or hard.
His hair was flax fresh gleaming from the card;
His eyes, the flax in bloom.

A match in might,
Fink lacked five inches of his comrade's height,
And of his weight scarce twenty pounds, they say.
His hair was black, his small eyes greenish gray
And restless as though feeling out of place
In such a jocund plenilunar face
That seemed made just for laughter. Then one saw
The pert pugnacious nose, the forward jaw,
The breadth of stubborn cheekbones, and one knew
That jest and fight to him were scarcely two,
But rather shifting phases of the joy
He felt in living. Careless as a boy,
Free handed with a gift or with a blow,
And giving either unto friend or foe
With frank good will, no man disliked him long.
They say his voice could glorify a song,
However loutish might the burden be;
And all the way from Pittsburg to the sea
The Rabelaisian stories of the rogue
Ran wedded to the richness of his brogue.
And wheresoever boatmen came to drink,
There someone broached some escapade of Fink
That well might fill the goat-hoofed with delight;
For Mike, the pantagruelizing wight,

Was happy in the health of bone and brawn
And had the code and conscience of the faun
To guide him blithely down the easy way.
A questionable hero, one might say:
And so indeed, by any civil law.
Moreover, at first glimpse of him one saw
A bull-necked fellow, seeming over stout;
Tremendous at a heavy lift, no doubt,
But wanting action. By the very span
Of chest and shoulders, one misjudged the man
When he was clothed. But when he stripped to swim,
Men flocked about to have a look at him,
Moved vaguely by that body's wonder-scheme
Wherein the shape of God's Adamic dream
Was victor over stubborn dust again!

O very lovely is a maiden, when
The old creative thrill is set astir
Along her blood, and all the flesh of her
Is shapen as to music! Fair indeed
A tall horse, lean of flank, clean-limbed for speed,
Deep-chested for endurance! Very fair
A soaring tree, aloof in violet air
Upon a hill! And 'tis a glorious thing
To see a bankfull river in the spring

Fight homeward! Children wonderful to see —
The Girl, the Horse, the River and the Tree —
As any suckled at the breast of sod;
Dissolving symbols leading back to God
Through vista after vista of the Plan!
But surely none is fairer than a man
In whom the lines of might and grace are one.

Bronzed with exposure to the wind and sun,
Behold the splendid creature that was Fink!
You see him strolling to the river's brink,
All ease, and yet tremendously alive.
He pauses, poised on tiptoe for the dive,
And momently it seems the mother mud,
Quick with a mystic seed whose sap is blood,
Mysteriously rears a human flower.
Clean as a windless flame the lines of power
Run rhythmic up the stout limbs, muscle-laced,
Athwart the ropy gauntness of the waist,
The huge round girth of chest, whereover spread
Enormous shoulders. Now above his head
He lifts his arms where big thews merge and flow
As in some dream of Michelangelo;
And up along the dimpling back there run,
Like lazy serpents stirring in the sun,

Slow waves that break and pile upon the slope
Of that great neck in swelling rolls, a-grope
Beneath the velvet softness of the skin.
Now suddenly the lean waist grows more thin,
The deep chest on a sudden grows more deep;
And with the swiftness of a tiger's leap,
The easy grace of hawks in swooping flight,
That terrible economy of might
And beauty plunges outward from the brink.

Thus God had made experiment with Fink,
As proving how 'twere best that men might
grow.

One turned from Mike to look upon Talbeau —
A little man, scarce five feet six and slim —
And wondered what his comrades saw in him
To justify their being thus allied.
Was it a sort of planetary pride
In lunar adoration? Hark to Mike:
"Shure I declare I niver saw his like —
A skinny whiffet of a man! And yit —
Well, do ye moind the plisint way we mit
And how he interjooced hisself that day?
'Twas up at Pittsburg, liquor flowin' fray
And ivrybody happy as a fool.
I cracked me joke and thin, as is me rule,

Looked round to view the havoc of me wit;
And ivrywan was doubled up wid it,
Save only wan, and him a scrubby mite.
Says I, and shure me language was polite,
'And did ye hear me little joke?' says I.
'I did' says he. 'And can't ye laugh, me b'y?'
'I can't' says he, the sassy little chap.
Nor did I git me hand back from the slap
I give him till he landed on me glim,
And I was countin' siventeen of him
And ivry dancin' wan of him was air!
Faith, whin I hit him he was niver there;
And shure it seemed that ivry wind that blew
Was peltin' knuckles in me face. Hurroo!
That toime, fer wance, I got me fill of fun!
God bless the little whiffet! It begun
Along about the shank of afthernoon;
And whin I washed me face, I saw the moon
A-shakin' wid its laughther in the shtrame.
And whin, betoimes, he wakened from his drame,
I says to him, 'Ye needn't laugh, me b'y:
A cliver little man ye are,' says I.
And Och, the face of me! I'm tellin' fac's —
Ye'd wonder did he do it wid an ax!
'Twas foine! 'Twas art!"

Thus, eloquent with pride,
Mike Fink, an expert witness, testified
To Talbeau's fistic prowess.

Now they say
There lived no better boatmen in their day
Than those three comrades; and the larger twain
In that wide land three mighty rivers drain
Found not their peers for skill in marksmanship.
Writes one, who made the long Ohio trip
With those boon cronies in their palmy days,
How once Mike Fink beheld a sow at graze
Upon the bank amid her squealing brood;
And how Mike, being in a merry mood,
Shot off each wiggling piglet's corkscrew tail
At twenty yards, while under easy sail
The boat moved on. And Carpenter could bore
A squirrel's eye clean at thirty steps and more —
So many say. But 'twas their dual test
Of mutual love and skill they liked the best
Of all their shooting tricks — when one stood up
At sixty paces with a whisky cup
Set brimming for a target on his head,
And felt the gusty passing of the lead,
Hot from the other's rifle, lift his hair.
And ever was the tin cup smitten fair

By each, to prove the faith of each anew:
For 'twas a rite of love between the two,
And not a mere capricious feat of skill.
"Och, shure, and can ye shoot the whisky, Bill?"
So Mike would end a wrangle. "Damn it, Fink!
Let's bore a pair of cups and have a drink!"
So Carpenter would stop a row grown stale.
And neither feared that either love might fail
Or either skill might falter.

Thus appear
The doughty three who held each other dear
For qualities they best could comprehend.

Now came the days of leisure to an end —
The days so gaily squandered, that would seem
To men at length made laughterless, a dream
Unthinkably remote; for Ilion held
Beneath her sixfold winding sheet of Eld
Seems not so hoar as bygone joy we prize
In evil days. Now vaguely pale the skies,
The glimmer neither starlight's nor the morn's.
A rude ironic merriment of horns
Startles the men yet heavy with carouse,
And sets a Ree dog mourning in the drowse,

Snout skyward from a lodge top. Sleepy birds
Chirp in the brush. A drone of sullen words
Awakes and runs increasing through the camp.
Thin smoke plumes, rising in the valley damp,
Flatten among the leathern tents and make
The whole encampment like a ghostly lake
Where bobbing heads of swimmers come and go,
As with the whimsy of an undertow
That sucks and spews them. Raising dust and
din,
The horse-guards drive their shaggy rabble in
From nightlong grazing. *Voyageurs*, with packs
Of folded tents and camp gear on their backs,
Slouch boatward through the reek. But when
prevails
The smell of frying pans and coffee pails,
They cease to sulk and, greatly heartened,
sing
Till ponies swell the chorus, nickering,
And race-old comrades jubilate as one.

Out of a roseless dawn the heat-pale sun
Beheld them toiling northward once again —
A hundred horses and a hundred men
Hushed in a windless swelter. Day on day
The same white dawn o'ertook them on their
way;

And daylong in the white glare sang no bird,
But only shrill grasshoppers clicked and whirred,
As though the heat were vocal. All the while
The dwindling current lengthened, mile on mile,
Meandrous in a labyrinth of sand.

Now e'er they left the Ree town by the Grand
The revellers had seen the spent moon roam
The morning, like a tipsy hag bound home.
A bubble-laden boat, they saw it sail
The sunset river of a fairy tale
When they were camped beside the Cannon-ball.
A spectral sun, it held the dusk in thrall
Nightlong about the Heart. The stars alone
Upon the cluttered Mandan lodges shone
The night they slept below the Knife. And when
Their course, long westward, shifted once again
To lead them north, the August moon was new.

The rainless Southwest wakened now and blew
A wilting, worrying, breath-sucking gale
That roared one moment in the bellied sail,
Next moment slackened to a lazy croon.
Now came the first misfortune. All forenoon

With line and pole the sweating boatmen strove
Along the east bank, while the horseguards drove
The drooping herd a little to the fore.
And then the current took the other shore.
Straight on, a maze of bar and shallow lay,
The main stream running half a mile away
To westward of a long low willow isle.
An hour they fought that stubborn half a mile
Of tumbled water. Down the running planks
The polesmen toiled in endless slanting ranks.
Now swimming, now a-flounder in the ooze
Of some blind bar, the naked cordelle crews
Sought any kind of footing for a pull;
While gust-bedevilled sails, now booming full,
Now flapping slack, gave questionable aid.

The west bank gained, along a ragged shade
Of straggling cottonwoods the boatmen sprawled
And panted. Out across the heat-enthralled,
Wind-fretted waste of shoal and bar they saw
The string of ponies ravelled up a draw
That mounted steeply eastward from the vale
Where, like a rampart flung across the trail,
A bluff rose sheer. Heads low, yet loath to graze,
They waxed and withered in the oily haze,

Now ponies, now a crawling flock of sheep.
Behind them three slack horseguards, half asleep,
Swayed limply, leaning on their saddle-bows.

The boat crews, lolling in a semi-doze,
Still watch the herd; nor do the gazers dream
What drama nears a climax over stream,
What others yonder may be watching too.
Now looming large upon the lucent blue,
The foremost ponies top the rim, and stare
High-headed down the vacancies of air
Beneath them; while the herders dawdle still
And gather wool scarce halfway up the hill —
A slumbrous sight beheld by heavy eyes.

But hark! What murmuring of far-flung cries
From yonder pocket in the folded rise
That flanks the draw? The herders also hear
And with a start glance upward to the rear.
Their spurred mounts plunge! What do they see but dust
Whipped skyward yonder in a freakish gust?
What panic overtakes them? Look again!
The rolling dust cloud vomits mounted men,
A ruck of tossing heads and gaudy gears
Beneath a bristling thicket of lean spears
Slant in a gust of onset!

Over stream
The boatmen stare dumfounded. Like a dream
In some vague region out of space and time
Evolves the swiftly moving pantomime
Before those loungers with ungirded loins;
Till one among them shouts "*Assiniboines!*"
And swelling to a roar, the wild word runs
Above a pellmell scramble for the guns,
Perceived as futile soon. Yet here and there
A few young hotheads fusillade the air,
And rage the more to know the deed absurd.
Some only grind their teeth without a word;
Some stand aghast, some grinningly inane,
While some, like watch-dogs rabid at the chain,
Growl curses, pacing at the river's rim.

So might unhappy spirits haunt the dim
Far shore of Styx, beholding outrage done
To loved ones in the region of the sun —
Rage goaded by its own futility!

For one vast moment strayed from time, they see
The war band flung obliquely down the slope,
The flying herdsmen, seemingly a-grope
In sudden darkness for their saddle guns.
A murmuring shock! And now the whole scene
runs

Into a dusty blur of horse and man;
And now the herd's rear surges on the van
That takes the cue of panic fear and flies
Stampeding to the margin of the skies,
Till all have vanished in the deeps of air.
Now outlined sharply on the sky-rim there
The victors pause and taunt their helpless foes
With buttocks patted and with thumbs at nose
And jeers scarce hearkened for the wind's guffaw.
They also vanish. In the sunwashed draw
Remains no sign of what has come to pass,
Save three dark splotches on the yellow grass,
Where now the drowsy horseguards have their will.

At sundown on the summit of the hill
The huddled boatmen saw the burial squad
Tuck close their comrades' coverlet of sod —
Weird silhouettes on melancholy gray.
And very few found anything to say
That night; though some spoke gently of the dead,
Remembering what that one did or said
At such and such a time. And some, more stirred
With lust of vengeance for the stolen herd,

Swore vaguely now and then beneath their breath.
Some, brooding on the imminence of death,
Grew wistful of their unreturning years;
And some who found their praying in arrears
Made shift to liquidate the debt that night.

But when once more the cheerful morning light
Came on them toiling, also came the mood
Of young adventure, and the solitude
Sang with them. For 'tis glorious to spend
One's golden days large-handed to the end —
The good broadpieces that can buy so much!
And what may hoarders purchase but a crutch
Wherewith to hobble graveward?

On they pressed
To where once more the river led them west;
And every day the hot wind, puff on puff,
Assailed them; every night they heard it sough
In thickets prematurely turning sere.

Then came the sudden breaking of the year.

Abruptly in a waning afternoon
The hot wind ceased, as fallen in a swoon
With its own heat. For hours the swinking crews
Had bandied scarcely credible good news

Of clouds across the dim northwestward plain;
And they who offered wagers on the rain
Found ready takers, though the gloomy rack,
With intermittent rumbling at its back,
Had mounted slowly. Now it towered high,
A blue-black wall of night across the sky
Shot through with glacial green.

A mystic change!
The sun was hooded and the world went strange —
A picture world! The hollow hush that fell
Made loud the creaking of the taut cordelle,
The bent spar's groan, the plunk of steering poles.
A bodeful calm lay glassy on the shoals;
The current had the look of flowing oil.
They saw the cloud's lip billow now and boil —
Black breakers gnawing at a coast of light;
They saw the stealthy wraith-arms of the night
Grope for the day to strangle it; they saw
The up-stream reaches vanish in a flaw
Of driving sand: and scarcely were the craft
Made fast to clumps of willow fore and aft,
When with a roar the blinding fury rolled
Upon them; and the breath of it was cold.
There fell no rain.

That night was calm and clear:
Just such a night as when the waning year
Has set aflare the old Missouri wood;
When Greenings are beginning to be good;
And when, so hollow is the frosty hush,
One hears the ripe persimmons falling — *plush!* —
Upon the littered leaves. The kindly time!
With cider in the vigor of its prime,
Just strong enough to edge the dullest wit
Should neighbor folk drop in awhile to sit
And gossip. O the dear flame-painted gloam,
The backlog's sputter on the hearth at home —
How far away that night! Thus many a lad,
Grown strangely old, remembered and was sad.
Wolves mourned among the bluffs. Like hanks of wool
Fog flecked the river. And the moon was full.

A week sufficed to end the trail. They came
To where the lesser river gives its name
And meed of waters to the greater stream.
Here, lacking horses, they must nurse the dream
Of beaver haunts beyond the Great Divide,
Build quarters for the winter trade, and bide
The coming up of Ashley and his band.

So up and down the wooded tongue of land
That thins to where the rivers wed, awoke
The sound of many axes, stroke on stroke;
And lustily the hewers sang at whiles —
The better to forget the homeward miles
In this, the homing time. And when the geese
With cacophonic councils broke the peace
Of frosty nights before they took to wing;
When cranes went over daily, southering,
And blackbirds chattered in the painted wood,
A mile above the river junction stood
The fort, adjoining the Missouri's tide.
Foursquare and thirty paces on a side,
A wall of sharpened pickets bristled round
A group of sod-roofed cabins. Bastions frowned
From two opposing corners, set to brave
A foe on either flank; and stout gates gave
Upon the stream, where now already came
The Indian craft, lured thither by the fame
Of traders building by the mating floods.

III

TO THE MUSSELSHELL

Now came at dawn a party of the Bloods,
Who told of having paddled seven nights
To parley for their people with the Whites,
The long way lying 'twixt a foe and foe;
For ever on their right hand lurked the Crow,
And on their left hand, the Assiniboine.
The crane-winged news, that where the waters join
The Long Knives built a village, made them sad;
Because the pastures thereabouts were bad,
Sustaining few and very scrawny herds.
So they had hastened hither, bringing words
Of kindness from their mighty men, to tell
What welcome waited on the Musselshell
Where stood the winter lodges of their band.

They rhapsodized the fatness of that land:
Lush valleys where all summer bison ran
To grass grown higher than a mounted man!
Aye, winter long on many a favored slope
The bison grazed with goat and antelope,

Nor were they ever leaner in the spring!
One heard the diving beaver's thundering
In all the streams at night; and one might hear
Uncounted bull elks whistle, when the year
Was painted for its death. Their squaws were good,
Strong bearers of the water and the wood,
With quiet tongues and never weary hands;
Tall as the fighting men of other lands,
And good to look upon. These things were so!
Why else then should Assiniboine and Crow
Assail the Bloods?

Now flaring up, they spoke
Of battles and their haters blown as smoke
Before the blizzard of their people's ire,
Devoured as grass before a prairie fire
That licks the heavens when the Northwind runs!
But, none the less, their warriors needed guns
And powder. Wherefor, let the Great White Chief
Return with them, ere yet the painted leaf
Had fallen. If so be he might not leave
This land of peoples skillful to deceive,
Who, needing much, had scarce a hide to sell —
Then send a party to the Musselshell

To trade and trap until the grass was young
And calves were yellow. With no forkéd tongue
The Bloods had spoken. Had the White Chief
ears?

So Major Henry called for volunteers;
And Fink was ready on the word to go
"And chance the bloody naygurs"; then Talbeau,
Then Carpenter; and after these were nine,
In whom young blood was like a beading wine,
Who lusted for the venture.

Late that night
The Bloods set out for home. With day's first
light
The dozen trappers followed, paddling west
In six canoes. And whatso suited best
The whimsies of the savage or his needs,
The slim craft carried — scarlet cloth and beads,
Some antiquated muskets, powder, ball,
Traps, knives, and little casks of alcohol
To lubricate the rusty wheels of trade!

So, singing as they went, the blithe brigade
Departed, with their galloping canoes
Heeding the tune. They had no time to lose;

For long and stubborn was the upstream way,
And when they launched their boats at break of day
They heard a thin ice tinkle at the prows.

A bodeful silence and a golden drowse
Possessed the land. The Four Winds held their breath
Before a vast serenity of death,
Wherein it seemed the reminiscent Year —
A yearning ghost now — wrought about its bier
Some pale hallucination of its May.
Bleak stretched the prairie to the walls of day,
So dry, that where a loping kiote broke
Its loneliness, it smouldered into smoke:
And when a herd of bison rumbled past,
'Twas like a great fire booming in a blast,
The rolling smudge whereof concealed the flame.

Proceeding in the truce of winds, they came
In five days to the vale the Poplar drains.
A trailing flight of southbound whooping cranes,
Across the fading West, was like a scrawl
Of cabalistic warning on a wall,
And counselled haste. In seven days they reached
The point where Wolf Creek empties in, and beached

Their keels along its dusty bed. In nine,
Elk Prairie and the Little Porcupine,
Now waterless, had fallen to the rear.
The tenth sun failed them on the lone frontier
Where flows the turbid Milk by countless bends
And where Assiniboian country ends
And Blackfoot Land begins. The hollow gloom
All night resounded with the beaver's boom;
A wolf pack yammered from a distant hill;
Anon a rutting elk cried, like a shrill
Arpeggio blown upon a flageolet.
A half day more their lifting prows were set
To westward; then the flowing trail led south
Two days by many a bend to Hell Creek's mouth
Amid the Badlands. Gazing from a height,
The lookout saw the marching of the Night
Across a vast black waste of peaks and deeps
That could have been infernal cinder-heaps,
The relics of an ancient hell gone cold.

That night they saw a wild aurora rolled
Above the lifeless wilderness. It formed
Northeastwardly in upright waves that stormed
To westward, sequent combers of the bow
That gulfed Polaris in their undertow
And hurtled high upon the Ursine Isles
A surf of ghostly fire. Again, at whiles,

A shimmering silken veil, it puffed and swirled
As 'twere the painted curtain of the world
That fluttered in a rising gale of doom.
And when it vanished in the starry gloom
One said "'Twill blow to-morrow."

So it did.
Ere noon they raised the Half Way Pyramid
Southwestward; saw its wraith-like summit lift
And seem to float northwest against a drift
Of wind-whipped dust. The lunar hills about —
Where late a bird's note startled like a shout
The hush that seemed the body of old Time —
Now bellowed where the hoofs of Yotunheim
Foreran the grizzled legions of the Snow.
'Twas peep of day when it began to blow,
A zephyr growing stronger with the light,
And now by fits it churned the river white
And whipped the *voyageurs* with freezing spray.
The windward reaches took their breath away.
Ghost-white and numb with cold, from bend to bend,
Where transiently the wind became a friend
To drive them south, they battled; till at last
Around a jutting bluff they met a blast

That choked as with a hand upon their throats
The song they sang for courage; hurled their boats
Against the farther shore and held them pinned.

A sting of spitting snow was in the wind.
Southwest by west across the waste, where fell
A murky twilight, lay the Musselshell —
Two days of travel with the crow for guide.
Here must they find them shelter, and abide
The passing of the blizzard as they could.
The banks bore neither plum nor cottonwood
And all the hills were naked as a hand.
But where, debouching from the broken land,
A river in the spring was wont to flow,
A northward moving herd of buffalo
Had crossed the river, evidently bound
From failing pastures to the grazing ground
Along the Milk: and where the herd had passed
Was scattered *bois de vache* enough to last
Until the storm abated. So they packed
Great blanketfuls of sun-dried chips, and stacked
The precious fuel where the wind was stilled —
A pocket hemmed by lofty bluffs and filled
With mingled dusk and thunder; bore therein
Canoes and cargo, pitched their tents of skin

About a central heap of glowing chips,
And dined on brittle bull-meat dried in strips,
With rum to wash it down.

It snowed all night.
The earth and heavens, in the morning light,
Were one white fury; and the stream ran slush.
Two days and nights the gale boomed; then a hush
Fell with the sun; and when the next dawn came —
A pale flare flanked by mockeries of flame —
The river lay as solid as the land.

Now caching half their goods, the little band
Resumed the journey, toiling under packs;
And twice they felt the morning at their backs,
A laggard traveller; and twice they saw
The sunset dwindle to a starry awe
Beyond the frozen vast, while still they pressed
The journey — bearded faces yearning west,
White as the waste they trod. Then one day more,
Southwestward, brought them to the jutting shore
That faced the goal.

A strip of poplars stretched
Along a winding stream, their bare boughs etched

Black line by line upon a flat of snow
Blue tinted in the failing afterglow.
Humped ponies 'mid the drifts and clumps of sage
Went nosing after grudging pasturage
Where'er it chanced the blizzard's whimsic flaws
Had swept the slough grass bare. A flock of squaws
Chopped wood and chattered in the underbrush,
Their ax strokes thudding dully in the hush,
Their nasal voices rising shrill and clear:
And, circled 'neath a bluff that towered sheer
Beside the stream, snug lodges wrought of hide,
Smoke-plumed and glowing with the fires inside,
Made glad the gazers. Even as they stood,
Content to stare a moment, from the wood
The clamor deepened, and a running shout
Among the lodges brought the dwellers out,
Braves, squaws, papooses; and the wolf dogs bayed;
And up the flat the stărtled ponies neighed,
Pricking their ears to question what befell.

So came Fink's party to the Musselshell,
Gaunt, bearded, yet — how gloriously young
And then, what feasts of bison fleece and tongue,
Of browned *boudin* and steaming humprib stew!
What roaring nights of wassailing they knew —

Gargantuan regales — when through the town
The fiery liquor ravined, melting down
The tribal hoard of beaver! How they made
Their merest gewgaws mighty in the trade!
Aye, merry men they were! Nor could they
know
How even then there came that wraith of woe
Amongst them; some swift-fingered Fate that
span
The stuff of sorrow, wove 'twixt man and man
The tangling mesh, that friend might ruin friend
And each go stumbling to a bitter end —
A threefold doom that now the Song recalls.

IV

THE NET IS CAST

There was a woman.

What enchantment falls
Upon that far off revel! How the din
Of jangling voices, chaffering to win
The lesser values, hushes at the words,
As dies the dissonance of brawling birds
Upon a calm before the storm is hurled!
Lo, down the age-long reaches of the world
What rose-breatht wind of ghostly music creeps!

And was she fair — this woman? Legend keeps
No answer; yet we know that she was young,
If truly comes the tale by many a tongue
That one of Red Hair's party fathered her.
What need to know her features as they were?
Was she not lovely as her lover's thought,
And beautiful as that wild love she wrought
Was fatal? Vessel of the world's desire,
Did she not glow with that mysterious fire
That lights the hearth or burns the rooftree down?
What face was hers who made the timeless town

A baleful torch forever? Hers who wailed
Upon the altar when the four winds failed
At Aulis? What the image that looked up
On Iseult from the contemplated cup
Of everlasting thirst? What wondrous face
Above the countless cradles of the race
Makes sudden heaven for the blinking eyes?
One face in truth! And once in Paradise
Each man shall stray unwittingly, and see —
In some unearthly valley where the Tree
With golden fruitage perilously fraught
Still stands — that image of God's afterthought.
Then shall the world turn wonderful and strange!

Who knows how came that miracle of change
To Fink at last? For he was not of such
As tend to prize one woman overmuch;
And legend has it that, from Pittsburg down
To Baton Rouge, in many a river town
Some blowsy Ariadne pined for Mike.
"It is me rule to love 'em all alike."
He often said, with slow, omniscient wink,
When just the proper quantity of drink
Had made him philosophic; "Glass or gourd,
Shure, now, they're all wan liquor whin they're
poured!
Aye, rum is rum, me b'y!"

Alas, the tongue!
How glibly are its easy guesses flung
Against the knowing reticence of years,
To echo laughter in the time of tears,
Raw gusts of mocking merriment that stings!
Some logic in the seeming ruck of things
Inscrutably confutes us!

Now had come
The time when rum no longer should be rum,
But witchwine sweet with peril. It befell
In this wise, insofar as tongue may tell
And tongues repeat the little eyes may guess
Of what may happen in that wilderness,
The human heart. There dwelt a mighty man
Among the Bloods, a leader of his clan,
Around whose life were centered many lives,
For many sons had he of many wives;
And also he was rich in pony herds.
Wherefore, they say, men searched his lightest
words
For hidden things, since anyone might see
That none had stronger medicine than he
To shape aright the stubborn stuff of life.
Among the women that he had to wife
Was she who knew the white man when the band
Of Red Hair made such marvel in the land,

She being younger then and little wise.
But in that she was pleasing to the eyes
And kept her fingers busy for her child
And bore a silent tongue, the great man smiled
Upon the woman, called her to his fire
And gave the Long Knife's girl a foster sire,
So that her maidenhood was never lean,
But like a pasture that is ever green
Because it feels a mountain's sunny flank.

Now in the season when the pale sun shrank
Far southward, like another kind of moon,
And dawns were laggard and the dark came soon,
It pleased the great man's whim to give a feast.
'Twas five days after Carpenter went east
With eight stout ponies and a band of three
To lift the cache; a fact that well might be
Sly father to the great man's festive mood —
A wistfully prospective gratitude,
Anticipating charity!

It chanced
That while the women sang and young men danced
About the drummers, and the pipe went round,
And ever 'twixt the songs arose the sound
Of fat dog stewing, Fink, with mournful eyes
And pious mien, lamented the demise

Of "pore owld Fido," till his comrades choked
With stifled laughter; soberly invoked
The plopping stew ("Down, Rover! Down, me
lad!");
Discussed the many wives the old man had
In language more expressive than polite.
So, last of all his merry nights, that night
Fink clowned it, little dreaming he was doomed
To wear that mask of sorrow he assumed
In comic mood, thenceforward to the last.
For even as he joked, the net was cast
About him, and the mystic change had come,
And he had looked on rum that was not rum —
The Long Knife's daughter!

Stooped beneath a pack
Of bundled twigs, she pushed the lodge-flap
back
And entered lightly; placed her load of wood
Beside the fire; then straightened up and stood
One moment there, a shapely girl and tall.
There wasn't any drama: that was all.
But when she left, the wit had died in Fink.
He seemed a man who takes the one more drink
That spoils the fun, relaxes jaw and jowl
And makes the jester, like a sunstruck owl,
Stare solemnly at nothing.

All next day
He moped about with scarce a word to say,
And no one dared investigate his whim.
But when the twilight came, there fell on him
A sentimental, reminiscent mood,
As though upon some frozen solitude
Within him, breathed a softening chinook,
Far strayed across the alplike years that look
On what one used to be and what one is.
And when he raised that mellow voice of his
In songs of lovers wedded to regret,
'Tis said that, unashamed, men's eyes grew wet,
So poignantly old memories were stirred.
And much his comrades marvelled as they heard
That ribald jester singing thus of love.
Nor could they solve the mystery thereof,
Until at dawn they saw him rise and take
A rifle of the latest Hawkin make,
Ball, powder, and a bolt of scarlet goods,
And hasten to the fringe of cottonwoods
Where rose the great man's lodge smoke. Then they knew;
For thus with gifts the Bloods were wont to woo
The daughter through the sire.

The white sun burned
Midmost the morning steep when he returned
Without his load and humming as he went.
And hour by hour he squatted in his tent
And stared upon the fire; save now and then
He stirred himself to lift the flap again
And cast an anxious gaze across the snows
Where stood the chieftain's lodge. And well did those
Who saw him know what sight he hoped to see;
For 'twas the custom that the bride-to-be
Should carry food to him she chose to wed.
Meanwhile, with seemly caution, be it said,
Fink's men enjoyed a comedy, and laid
Sly wagers on the coming of the maid —
She would! She wouldn't! So the brief day waned.

Now when the sun, a frosty specter maned
With corruscating vapors, lingered low
And shadows lay like steel upon the snow,
An old squaw, picking faggots in the brush,
Saw that which set her shrieking in the hush.
"They come! They come!" Then someone shouted "Crows!"
The town spewed tumult, men with guns and bows,

Half clad and roaring; shrill hysteric wives
With sticks of smoking firewood, axes, knives;
Dogs, bristle-necked and snarling. So they pressed
To meet a foe, as from a stricken nest
The hornet swarm boils over.

Blinking, dazed
With sudden light and panic fear, they gazed
About the frozen waste; and then they saw
Eight laden ponies filing up the draw,
Their nostrils steaming, slack of neck and slow.
Behind them, stumbling in the broken snow,
Three weary trappers trudged, while in the lead
Strode Carpenter. A goodly sight, indeed!
Upstanding, eagle-faced and eagle-eyed,
The ease of latent power in his stride,
He dwarfed the panting pony that he led;
And when the level sunlight 'round his head
Made glories in the frosted beard and hair,
Some Gothic fighting god seemed walking there,
Strayed from the dim Hercynian woods of old.

How little of a story can be told!
Let him who knows what happens in the seed
Before the sprout breaks sunward, make the deed

A plummet for the dreaming deeps that surged
Beneath the surface ere the deed emerged
For neat appraisal by the rule of thumb!
The best of Clio is forever dumb,
To human ears at least. Nor shall the Song
Presume to guess and tell how all night long,
While roared the drunken orgy and the trade,
Doom quickened in the fancy of a maid,
The daughter of the Long Knife; how she saw,
Serenely moving through a spacious awe
Behind shut lids where never came the brawl,
That shining one, magnificently tall,
A day-crowned mortal brother of the sun.
Suffice it here that, when the night was done
And morning, like an uproar in the east,
Aroused the town still heavy with the feast,
All men might see what whimsic, fatal bloom
A soil, dream-plowed and seeded in the gloom,
Had nourished unto blowing in the day.

'Twas then the girl appeared and took her way
Across the snow with hesitating feet.
She bore a little pot of steaming meat;
And when midmost the open space, she turned
And held it up to where the morning burned,
As one who begs a blessing of the skies.
Unconscious of the many peeping eyes,

Erect, with wrapt uplifted face she stood —
A miracle of shapely maidenhood —
Before the flaming god. And many heard,
Or seemed to hear by piecing word to word,
The prayer she muttered to the wintry sky:
"O Sun, behold a maiden! Pure am I!
Look kindly on the little gift I give;
For, save you smile upon it, what can live?
Bright Father, hear a maiden!" Then, as one
Who finds new courage for a task begun,
She turned and hastened to the deed.

They say
There was no dearth of gossiping that day
Among the lodges. Shrewish tongues there were
That clacked no happy prophecies of her.
And many wondered at the chieftain's whim.
The Long Knife's girl had wrought a spell on him;
Why else then was he silent? See her shrink
A moment there before the tent of Fink,
As one who feels a sudden sleety blast!
But look again! She starts, and hurries past!
All round the circled viliage, lodges yawn
To see how brazen in the stare of dawn
A petted girl may be. For now, behold!
Was ever maiden of the Bloods so bold?

She stops before another tent and stoops,
Her fingers feeling for the buckskin loops
That bind the rawhide flap. 'Tis opened wide.
The slant white light of morning falls inside,
And half the town may witness at whose feet
She sets the little pot of steaming meat —
'Tis Carpenter!

V

THE QUARREL

Perceptibly, at length,
The days grew longer, and the winter's strength
Increased to fury. Down across the flat
The blizzards bellowed; and the people sat
Fur-robed about the smoky fires that stung
Their eyes to streaming, when a freak gust flung
The sharp reek back with flaws of powdered snow.
And much the old men talked of long ago,
Invoking ghostly Winters from the Past,
Till cold snap after cold snap followed fast,
And none might pile his verbal snow so deep
But some athletic memory could heap
The drifts a trifle higher; give the cold
A greater rigor in the story told;
Put bellows to a wind already high.
And ever greater reverence thereby
The old men won from gaping youths, who heard,
Like marginalia to the living word,
The howling of the poplars tempest-bent,
The smoke-flap cracking sharply at the vent,

The lodge poles creaking eerily. And O!
The happy chance of living long ago,
Of having wrinkles now and being sires
With many tales to tell around the fires
Of days when things were bigger! All night long
White hands came plucking at the buckskin thong
That bound the door-flap, and the writhing dark
Was shrill with spirits. By the snuffling bark
Of dogs men knew that homesick ghosts were there.
And often in a whirl of chilling air
The weird ones entered, though the flap still held,
Built up in smoke the shapes they knew of eld,
Grew thin and long to vanish as they came.

Now had the scandal, like a sudden flame
Fed fat with grasses, perished in the storm.
The fundamental need of keeping warm
Sufficed the keenest gossip for a theme;
And whimsies faded like a warrior's dream
When early in the dawn the foemen cry.

The time when calves are black had blustered by —
A weary season — since the village saw
The chief's wife pitching for her son-in-law

The nuptial lodge she fashioned. Like a bow
That feels the arrow's head, the moon hung low
That evening when they gave the wedding gifts;
And men had seen it glaring through the rifts
Of wintry war as up the east it reeled,
A giant warrior's battle-bitten shield —
But now it braved no more the charging air.
Meanwhile the lodge of Carpenter stood there
Beside the chieftain's, huddled in the snows,
And, like a story everybody knows,
Was little heeded now.

But there was one
Who seldom noted what was said or done
Among his comrades; he would sit and look
Upon the fire, as one who reads a book
Of woeful doings, ever on the brink
Of ultimate disaster. It was Fink:
And seeing this, Talbeau was sick at heart
With dreading that his friends might drift apart
And he be lost, because he loved them both.
But, knowing well Mike's temper, he was loath
To broach the matter. Also, knowing well
That silence broods upon the hottest hell,
He prayed that Fink might curse.

So worried past
The days of that estrangement. Then at last
One night when round their tent the blizzard roared
And, nestled in their robes, the others snored,
Talbeau could bear the strain no more and spoke.
He opened with a random little joke,
Like some starved hunter trying out the range
Of precious game where all the land is strange;
And, as the hunter, missing, hears the grim
And spiteful echo-rifles mocking him,
His own unmirthful laughter mocked Talbeau.
He could have touched across the ember-glow
Mike's brooding face — yet Mike was far away.
And O that nothing more than distance lay
Between them — any distance with an end!
How tireless then in running to his friend
A man might be! For suddenly he knew
That Mike would have him choose between the two.
How could he choose 'twixt Carpenter and Fink?
How idle were a choice 'twixt food and drink
When, choosing neither, one were sooner dead!

Thus torn within, and hoarse with tears unshed,
He strove again to find his comrade's heart:
"O damn it, Mike, don't make us drift apart!

Don't do it, Mike! This ain't a killin' fuss,
And hadn't ought to faze the three of us
That's weathered many a rough-and-tumble fight!
W'y don't you mind that hell-a-poppin' night
At Baton Rouge three years ago last fall —
The time we fit the whole damned dancin' hall
And waded out nigh belly-deep in men?
O who'd have said a girl could part us, then?
And, Mike, that fracas in the Vide Poche dive!
Can you forget it long as you're alive? —
A merry time! Us strollin' arm-in-arm
From drink to drink, not calculatin' harm,
But curious, because St. Louis town
Fair boiled with greasy mountain men, come down
All brag and beaver, howlin' for a spree!
And then — you mind? — a feller jostled me —
'Twas at the bar — a chap all bones and big.
Says he in French: 'You eater of a pig,
Make room for mountain men!' And then says you
In Irish, aimin' where the whiskers grew,
And landin' fair: 'You eater of a dog,
Make room for boatmen!' Like a punky log
That's water-soaked, he dropped. What happened then?
A cyclone in a woods of mountain men —

That's what! O Mike, you can't forget it now!
And what in hell's a woman, anyhow,
To memories like that?"

So spoke Talbeau,
And, pausing, heard the hissing of the snow,
The snoring of the sleepers, and the cries
Of blizzard-beaten poplars. Still Fink's eyes
Upon the crumbling embers pored intent.
Then momently, or so it seemed, there went
Across that alien gaze a softer light,
As when bleak windows in a moony night
Flush briefly with a candle borne along.
And suddenly the weary hope grew strong
In him who saw the glimmer, and he said:
"O Mike, I see the good old times ain't dead!
Why don't you fellers shoot the whisky cup
The way you used to do?"

Then Fink looked up.
'Twas bad the way the muscles twitched and worked
About his mouth, and in his eyes there lurked
Some crouchant thing. "To hell wid you!" he cried.
So love and hate that night slept side by side;

And hate slept well, but love lay broad awake
And, like a woman, for the other's sake
Eked out the lonely hours with worrying.

Now came a heartsick yearning for the spring
Upon Talbeau; for surely this bad dream
Would vanish with the ice upon the stream,
Old times be resurrected with the grass!
But would the winter ever, ever pass,
The howling of the blizzard ever cease?
So often now he dreamed of hearing geese
Remotely honking in the rain-washed blue;
And ever when the blur of dawn broke through
The scudding rack, he raised the flap to see,
By sighting through a certain forkéd tree,
How much the sun made northward.

Then, one day,
The curtain of the storm began to fray;
The poplars' howling softened to a croon;
The sun set clear, and dusk revealed the moon —
A thin-blown bubble in a crystal bowl.
All night, as 'twere the frozen prairie's soul
That voiced a hopeless longing for the spring,
The wolves assailed with mournful questioning
The starry deeps of that tremendous hush.

Dawn wore the mask of May — a rosy flush.
It seemed the magic of a single bird
Might prove the seeing of the eye absurd
And make the heaped-up winter billow green.
On second thought, one knew the air was keen —
A whetted edge in gauze. The village fires
Serenely builded tenuous gray spires
That vanished in the still blue deeps of awe.
All prophets were agreed upon a thaw.
And when the morning stood a spearlength high,
There grew along the western rim of sky
A bank of cloud that had a rainy look.
It mounted slowly. Then the warm chinook
Began to breathe a melancholy drowse
And sob among the naked poplar boughs,
As though the prairie dreamed a dream of June
And knew it for a dream. All afternoon
The gale increased. The sun went down blood-
red;
The young moon, perilously fragile, fled
To early setting. And the long night roared.

Tempestuously broke the day and poured
An intermittent glory through the rifts
Amid the driven fog. The sodden drifts
Already grooved and withered in the blast;
And when the flying noon stared down aghast,

The bluffs behind the village boomed with
flood.
What magic in that sound to stir the blood
Of winter-weary men! For now the spring
No longer seemed a visionary thing,
But that which any morning might bestow.
And most of all that magic moved Talbeau;
For, scrutinizing Fink, he thought he saw
Some reflex of that February thaw —
A whit less curling of the upper lip.
O could it be returning comradeship,
That April not beholden to the moon
Nor chatteled to the sun?

That afternoon
They played at euchre. Even Fink sat in;
And though he showed no eagerness to win,
Forgot the trumps and played his bowers wild,
There were not lacking moments when he smiled,
A hesitating smile 'twixt wan and grim.
It seemed his stubborn mood embarrassed him
Because regret now troubled it with shame.

The great wind died at midnight. Morning
came,
Serene and almost indolently warm —
As when an early April thunder storm

Has cleansed the night and vanished with the gloom;
When one can feel the imminence of bloom
As 'twere a spirit in the orchard trees;
When, credulous of blossom, come the bees
To grumble 'round the seepages of sap.
So mused Talbeau while, pushing back the flap,
Instinctively he listened for a bird
To fill the hush. Then presently he heard —
And 'twas the only sound in all the world —
The trickle of the melting snow that purled
And tinkled in the bluffs above the town.
The sight of ragged Winter patched with brown,
The golden peace and, palpitant therein,
That water note, spun silverly and thin,
Begot a wild conviction in the man:
The wounded Winter weakened; now began
The reconciliation! Hate would go
And, even as the water from the snow,
Old comradeship come laughing back again!

All morning long he pondered, while the men
Played seven-up. And scarce a trick was played
But someone sang a snatch of song or made
A merry jest. And when the game was balked
By one who quite forgot his hand, and talked

Of things in old St. Louis, none demurred.
And thus, by noon, it seemed the lightest word
Of careless salutation would avail
To give a happy ending to the tale
Of clouded friendship. So he 'rose and went,
By studied indirection, to the tent
Of Carpenter, as one who takes the air.
And, as he raised the flap and entered there,
A sudden gale of laughter from the men
Blew after him. What music in it then!
What mockery, when memory should raise
So often in the coming nights and days
The ruthless echo of it!

Click on click
Amid the whirlwind finish of a trick
The cards fell fast, while King and Queen and Ace,
With meaner trumps for hounds, pursued the chase
Of wily Knave and lurking Deuce and Ten;
When suddenly the game-enchanted men
Were conscious of a shadow in the place,
And glancing up they saw the smiling face
Of Carpenter, thrust in above Talbeau's.
"How goes it, Boys?" said he; and gaily those
Returned the greeting. "Howdy, Mike!" he said;
And with a sullen hanging of the head

Fink mumbled "Howdy!" Gruff — but what
of that?
One can not doff displeasure like a hat —
'Twould dwindle snow-like.

Nothing else would do
But Carpenter should play. Now Fink played
too;
And, having brought his cherished ones together,
Talbeau surrendered to the languid weather
And, dreamily contented, watched the sport.
All afternoon the pictured royal court
Pursued its quarry in the mimic hunt;
And Carpenter, now gayer than his wont,
Lost much; while Fink, with scarce a word to say,
His whole attention fixed upon the play,
Won often. So it happened, when the sun
Was near to setting, that the day seemed won
For friendliness, however stood the game.
But even then that Unseen Player came
Who stacks the shuffled deck of circumstance
And, playing wild the Joker men call Chance,
Defeats the Aces of our certainty.

The cards were dealt and Carpenter bid three.
The next man passed the bid, and so the next.
Then Fink, a trifle hesitant and vexed,

Bid four on spades. And there was one who said
In laughing banter: "Mike, I'll bet my head
As how them spades of your'n 'll dig a hole!"
And in some subtle meaning of the soul
The wag was more a prophet than he knew.

Fink held the Ace and Deuce, and that made two:
His black King scored another point with Knave.
But Carpenter, to whom that Weird One gave
A band of lesser trumps to guard his Ten,
Lay low until the Queen had passed, and then
Swept in a last fat trick for Game, and scored.
And now the players slapped their knees and roared:
"You're set! You're in the hole! He set you, Mike!"

Then suddenly they saw Fink crouch to strike;
And ere they comprehended what they saw,
There came a thud of knuckles on a jaw
And Carpenter rolled over on the ground.
One moment in a breathless lapse of sound
The stricken man strove groggily to 'rise,
The emptiness of wonder in his eyes
Turned dreamily with seeming unconcern
Upon Mike's face, where now began to burn

The livid murder-lust. 'Twixt breath and breath
The hush and immobility of death
Made there a timeless picture. Then a yell,
As of a wild beast charging, broke the spell.
Fink sprang to crush, but midway met Talbeau
Who threw him as a collie dog may throw
A raging bull. But Mike was up again,
And wielding thrice the might of common men,
He gripped the little man by nape and thigh
And lightly lifted him and swung him high
And flung him; and the smitten tent went down.
Then 'rose a roar that roused the teeming town,
And presently a shouting rabble surged
About the wreck, whence tumblingly emerged
A knot of men who grappled Fink and clung.
Prodigiously he rose beneath them, flung
His smashing arms, man-laden, forth and back;
But stubbornly they gripped him, like a pack
That takes uncowed the maulings of a bear.
"Let Carpenter get up!" they cried. "Fight fair!
Fight fair! Fight fair!"

Quite leisurely the while
The stricken man arose, a sleepy smile
About his quiet eyes. Indeed, he seemed
As one but lately wakened, who has dreamed

A pleasing dream. But when he stroked his beard
And gazed upon his fingers, warmly smeared
With crimson from the trickle at his jaw,
His eyes went eagle-keen with what they saw.
The stupor passed. He hastily untied
His buckskin shirt and, casting it aside,
Stood naked to the hips. The tumult ceased
As, panting hard, the *voyageurs* released
Their struggling charge and, ducking to a swing
Of those freed arms, sought safety, scampering.

Fink also stripped his shirt; and as the man
Stood thus revealed, a buzz of wonder ran
Amid the jostling rabble. Few there were
Who in that moment envied Carpenter,
Serenely poised and waiting placid browed:
For shall a lonely cedar brave a cloud
Bulged big and shapen to the cyclone's whirl?
Lo, even as the body of a girl,
The body of the blond was smooth and white;
But vaguely, as one guesses at the might
Of silent waters running swift and deep,
One guessed what stores of power lay asleep
Beneath the long fleet lines of trunk and limb.
Thus God had made experiment with him;

And, groping for the old Adamic dream,
Had found his patterns in the tree and stream,
As Fink's in whirling air and hungry flame.

Now momently the picture there became
A blur of speed. Mike rushed. The tiptoe town
Craned eagerly to see a man go down
Before that human thunder gust. But lo!
As bends a sapling when the great winds blow,
The other squatted, deftly swayed aside,
And over him the slashing blows went wide.
Fink sprawled. But hardly had a spreading roar
O'errun the town, when silence as before
Possessed the scene; for Mike flashed back again
With flame-like speed, and suddenly the men
Clenched, leaning neck to neck.

Without a word,
Like horn-locked bulls that strive before the herd,
They balanced might with might; till Mike's hands whipped
Beneath the other's arm-pits, met and gripped
Across the broad white shoulders. Then began
The whole prodigious engine of the man
To bulge and roll and darken with the strain.
Like rivulets fed suddenly with rain,

The tall one's thews rose ropily and flowed
Converging might against the growing load
Of those tremendous arms that strove to crush.

Their labored breathing whistled in the hush.
One saw the blond man's face go bluish red,
As deeper, deeper sank Fink's shaggy head
Amid his heaped-up shoulder brawn. One knew
That very soon the taller of the two
Must yield and take that terrible embrace.

A tense hypnotic quiet filled the place.
The men were like two wrestlers in a dream
That holds an endless moment; till a scream
Fell stab-like on the hush. One saw Talbeau,
Jaws set, hands clenched, eyes wild, and bending
low,
As though he too were struggling, slowly bowed
Beneath Fink's might. And then —

What ailed the crowd?
Swept over by a flurry of surprise,
They swayed and jostled, shouting battle-cries
And quips and jeers of savage merriment.
One moment they had seen the tall man bent,
About to break: then, falling back a-haunch,
His feet had plunged against the other's paunch
And sent Fink somersaulting.

Once again
A silence fell as, leaping up, the men
Were mingled briefly in a storm of blows.
Now, tripping like a dancer on his toes,
The blond man sparred; while, like a baited bear,
Half blinded with the lust to crush and tear,
Fink strove to clutch that something lithe and sleek
That stung and fled and stung. Upon his cheek
A flying shadow laid a vivid bruise;
Another — and his brow began to ooze
Slow drops that spattered on his bearded jaw.
Again that shadow passed — his mouth went raw,
And like a gunshot wound it gaped and bled.

Fink roared with rage and plunged with lowered head
Upon this thing that tortured, hurled it back
Amid the crowd. One heard a thud and smack
Of rapid blows on bone and flesh — and then
One saw the tall man stagger clear again
With gushing nostrils and a bloody grin,
And down his front the whiteness of the skin
Was striped with flowing crimson to the waist.
Unsteadily he wheeled about and faced
The headlong hate of his antagonist.
Now toe to toe and fist to flying fist,

They played at give and take; and all the while
The blond man smiled that riddle of a smile,
As one who meditates upon a jest.

Yet surely he was losing! Backward pressed,
He strove in vain to check his raging foe.
Fink lunged and straightened to a shoulder blow
With force enough to knock a bison down.
The other dodged it, squatting. Then the town
Discovered what a smile might signify.
For, even as the futile blow went by,
One saw the lithe white form shoot up close in,
A hooked white arm jab upward to the chin —
Once — twice — and yet again. With eyes a-stare,
His hands aloft and clutching at the air,
Fink tottered backward, limply lurched and fell.

Then came to pass what stilled the rabble's yell,
So strange it was. And 'round the fires that night
The wisest warriors, talking of the fight,
Could not explain what happened at the end.
No friend, they said, makes war upon a friend;

Nor does a foe have pity on a foe:
And yet the tall white chief had bathed with
snow
The bloody mouth and battered cheek and brow
Of him who fell!

Queer people, anyhow,
The Long Knives were — and hard to under-
stand!

VI

THE SHOOTING OF THE CUP

Bull-roaring March had swept across the land,
And now the evangelic goose and crane,
Forerunners of the messianic Rain,
Went crying through the wilderness aloft.
Fog hid the sun, and yet the snow grew soft.
The monochrome of sky and poplar bough,
Drab tracery on drab, was stippled now
With swelling buds; and slushy water ran
Upon the ice-bound river that began
To stir and groan as one about to wake.

Now, while they waited for the ice to break,
The trappers fashioned bull-boats — willow wrought
To bowl-like frames, and over these drawn taut
Green bison hides with bison sinew sewn.
And much they talked about the Yellowstone:
How fared their comrades yonder since the fall?
And would they marvel at the goodly haul
Of beaver pelts these crazy craft should bring?
And what of Ashley starting north that spring

With yet another hundred? Did his prows
Already nose the flood? — Ah, cherry boughs
About St. Louis now were loud with bees
And white with bloom; and wading to the knees,
The cattle browsed along the fresh green sloughs!
Yes, even now the leaning cordelle crews
With word from home (so far away, alas!)
Led north the marching armies of the grass,
As 'twere the heart of Summertime they towed!

So while they shaped the willow frames and sewed
The bison hides, the trappers' hearts were light.
They talked no longer now about the fight.
That story, shaped and fitted part by part,
Unwittingly was rounded into art,
And, being art, already it was old.
When this bleak time should seem the age of gold,
These men, grown gray and garrulous, might tell
Of wondrous doings on the Musselshell —
How Carpenter, the mighty, fought, and how
Great Fink went down. But spring was coming now,
And who's for backward looking in the spring?

Yet one might see that Mike still felt the sting
Of that defeat; for often he would brood,
Himself the center of a solitude

Wherein the friendly chatter of the band
Was like a wind that makes a lonely land
Seem lonelier. And much it grieved Talbeau
To see a haughty comrade humbled so;
And, even more, he feared what wounded pride
Might bring to pass, before their boats could ride
The dawnward reaches of the April floods
And leave behind the village of the Bloods;
For now it seemed a curse was on the place.
Talbeau was like a man who views a race
With all to lose: so slowly crept the spring,
So surely crawled some formless fatal thing,
He knew not what it was. But should it win,
Life could not be again as it had been
And spring would scarcely matter any more.
The daybreak often found him at the shore,
A ghostly figure in the muggy light,
Intent to see what progress over night
The shackled river made against the chain.

And then at last, one night, a dream of rain
Came vividly upon him. How it poured!
A witch's garden was the murk that roared
With bursting purple bloom. 'Twas April weather,
And he and Mike and Bill were boys together

Beneath the sounding shingle roof at home.
He smelled the odor of the drinking loam
Still rolling mellow from the recent share;
And he could feel the meadow greening there
Beyond the apple orchard. Then he 'woke
And raised the flap. A wraith of thunder-smoke
Was trailing off along the prairie's rim.
Half dreaming yet, the landscape puzzled him.
What made the orchard seem so tall and lean?
And surely yonder meadow had been green
A moment since! What made it tawny now?
And yonder where the billows of the plow
Should glisten fat and sleek —?

The drowsy spell
Dropped off and left him on the Musselshell
Beneath the old familiar load of care.
He looked aloft. The stars had faded there.
The sky was cloudless. No, one lonely fleece
Serenely floated in the spacious peace
And from the distance caught prophetic light.
In truth he had heard thunder in the night
And dashing rain; for all the land was soaked,
And where the withered drifts had lingered, smoked
The naked soil. But since the storm was gone,
How strange that still low thunder mumbled on —

An unresolving cadence marred at whiles
By dull explosions! Now for miles and miles
Along the vale he saw a trail of steam
That marked the many windings of the stream,
As though the river simmered. Then he knew.
It was the sound of April breaking through!
The resurrection thunder had begun!
The ice was going out, and spring had won
The creeping race with dread!

His ringing cheers
Brought out the blinking village by the ears
To share the news; and though they could not know
What ecstasy of triumph moved Talbeau,
Yet lodge on lodge took up the joyous cry
That set the dogs intoning to the sky,
The drenched cayuses shrilly nickering.
So man and beast proclaimed the risen Spring
Upon the Musselshell.

And all day long
The warring River sang its ocean song.
And all that night the spirits of the rain
Made battle music with a shattered chain
And raged upon the foe. And did one gaze
Upon that struggle through the starry haze,

One saw enormous bodies heaved and tossed,
Where stubbornly the Yotuns of the Frost
With shoulder set to shoulder strove to stem
The wild invasion rolling over them.
Nor in the morning was the struggle done.
Serenely all that day the doughty Sun,
A banished king returning to his right,
Beheld his legions pouring to the fight,
Exhaustless; and his cavalries that rode —
With hoofs that rumbled and with manes that flowed
White in the war gust — crashing on the foe.
And all that night the din of overthrow
Arose to heaven from the stricken field;
A sound as of the shock of spear and shield,
Of wheels that trundled and the feet of hordes,
Of shrieking horses mad among the swords,
Hurrahing of attackers and attacked,
And sounds as of a city that is sacked
When lust for loot runs roaring through the night.
Dawn looked upon no battle, but a flight.
And when the next day broke, the spring flood flowed
Like some great host that takes the homeward road
With many spoils — a glad triumphal march,
Of which the turquoise heaven was the arch.

Now comes a morning when the tents are down
And packed for travel; and the whole Blood town
Is out along the waterfront to see
The trappers going. Dancing as with glee,
Six laden bull-boats feel the April tide
And sweep away. Along the riverside
The straggling, shouting rabble keeps abreast
A little while; but, longer than the rest,
A weeping runner races with the swirl
And loses slowly. 'Tis the Long Knife's girl,
Whom love perhaps already makes aware
How flows unseen a greater river there —
The never-to-be-overtaken days.
And now she pauses at the bend to gaze
Upon the black boats dwindling down the long
Dawn-gilded reach. A merry trapper's song
Comes liltingly to mock her, and a hand
Waves back farewell. Now 'round a point of land
The bull-boats disappear; and that is all —
Save only that long waiting for the fall
When he would come again.

All day they swirled
Northeastwardly. The undulating world
Flowed by them — wooded headland, greening vale
And naked hill — as in a fairy tale

Remembered in a dream. And when the flare
Of sunset died behind them, and the air
Went weird and deepened to a purple gloom,
They saw the white Enchanted Castles loom
Above them, slowly pass and drift a-rear,
Dissolving in the starry crystal sphere
'Mid which they seemed suspended.
Late to camp,
They launched while yet the crawling valley damp
Made islands of the distant hills and hid
The moaning flood. The Half Way Pyramid
That noon stared in upon them from the south.
'Twas starlight when they camped at Hell Creek's mouth,
Among those hills where evermore in vain
The Spring comes wooing, and the April rain
Is tears upon a tomb. And once again
The dead land echoed to the songs of men
Bound dayward when the dawn was but a streak.
Halfway to noon they sighted Big Dry Creek,
Not choked with grave dust now, but carolling
The universal music of the spring.
Then when the day was midway down the sky,
They reached the Milk. And howsoe'er the eye
Might sweep that valley with a far-flung gaze,
It found no spot uncovered with a maze

Of bison moving lazily at browse —
Scarce wilder than a herd of dairy cows
That know their herdsman.

Now the whole band willed
To tarry. So they beached their boats and killed
Three fatling heifers; sliced the juicy rumps
For broiling over embers; set the humps
And loins to roast on willow spits, and threw
The hearts and livers in a pot to stew
Against the time of dulling appetites.
And when the stream ran opalescent lights
And in a scarlet glow the new moon set,
The feast began. And some were eating yet,
And some again in intervals of sleep,
When upside down above the polar steep
The Dipper hung. And many tales were told
And there was hearty laughter as of old,
With Fink's guffaw to swell it now and then.
It seemed old times were coming back again;
That truly they had launched upon a trip
Whereof the shining goal was comradeship:
And tears were in the laughter of Talbeau,
So glad was he. For how may mortals know
Their gladness, save they sense it by the fear
That whispers how the very thing held dear
May pass away?

The smoky dawn was lit,
And, suddenly become aware of it,
A flock of blue cranes, dozing on the sand,
With startled cries awoke the sprawling band
And took the misty air with moaning wings.
Disgruntled with the chill drab scheme of things,
Still half asleep and heavy with the feast,
The trappers launched their boats. But when the east
Burned rosily, therefrom a raw wind blew,
And ever with the growing day it grew
Until the stream rose choppily and drove
The fleet ashore. Camped snugly in a grove
Of cottonwoods, they slept. And when the gale,
Together with the light, began to fail,
They 'rose and ate and set a-drift again.

It seemed the solid world that mothers men
With twilight and the falling moon had passed,
And there was nothing but a hollow vast,
By time-outlasting stars remotely lit,
And they who at the central point of it
Hung motionless; while, rather sensed than seen,
The phantoms of a world that had been green
Stole by in silence — shapes that once were trees,
Black wraiths of bushes, airy traceries

Remembering the hills. Then sleep made swift
The swinging of the Dipper and the lift
Of stars that dwell upon the day's frontier;
Until at length the wheeling hollow sphere
Began to fill. And just at morningshine
They landed at the Little Porcupine.

Again they slept and, putting off at night,
They passed the Elk Horn Prairie on the right
Halfway to dawn and Wolf Creek. One night more
Had vanished when they slept upon the shore
Beside the Poplar's mouth. And three had fled
When, black against the early morning red,
The Fort that Henry builded heard their calls,
And sentries' rifles spurting from the walls
Spilled drawling echoes. Then the gates swung wide
And shouting trappers thronged the riverside
To welcome back the homing *voyageurs*.

That day was spent in sorting out the furs,
With eager talk of how the winter went;
And with the growing night grew merriment.
The hump and haunches of a bison cow
Hung roasting at the heaped-up embers now

On Henry's hearth. The backlog whined and popped
And, sitting squat or lounging elbow-propped,
Shrewd traders in the merchandise of tales
Held traffic, grandly careless how the scales
Tiptilted with a slight excessive weight.
And when the roast was finished, how they ate!
And there was that which set them singing too
Against the deep bass music of the flue,
While catgut screamed ecstatic in the lead,
Encouraging the voices used and keyed
To vast and windy spaces.

Later came
A gentler mood when, staring at the flame,
Men ventured reminiscences and spoke
About Kentucky people or the folk
Back yonder in Virginia or the ways
They knew in old St. Louis; till the blaze
Fell blue upon the hearth, and in the gloom
And melancholy stillness of the room
They heard the wind of midnight wail outside.
Then there was one who poked the logs and cried:
"Is this a weeping drunk? I swear I'm like
To tear my hair! Sing something lively, Mike!"
And Fink said nought; but after poring long
Upon the logs, began an Irish song —

A gently grieving thing like April rain,
That while it wakes old memories of pain,
Wakes also odors of the violet.
A broken heart, it seemed, could ne'er forget
The eyes of Nora, dead upon the hill.
And when he ceased the men sat very still,
As hearing yet the low caressing note
Of some lost angel mourning in his throat.
And afterwhile Mike spoke: "Shure, now," said
he,
"'Tis in a woman's eyes shtrong liquors be;
And if ye drink av thim — and if ye drink —"
For just a moment in the face of Fink
Talbeau beheld that angel yearning through;
And wondering if Carpenter saw too,
He looked, and lo! the guileless fellow — grinned!

As dreaming water, stricken by a wind,
Gives up the imaged heaven that it knows,
So Fink's face lost the angel. He arose
And left the place without a word to say.

The morrow was a perfect April day;
Nor might one guess — so friendly was the sun,
So kind the air — what thread at length was
spun,
What shears were opened now to sever it.
No sullen mood was Mike's. His biting wit

Made gay the trappers busy with the fur;
Though more and ever more on Carpenter
His sallies fell, with ever keener whet.
And Carpenter, unskilled in banter, met
The sharper sally with the broader grin.
But, by and by, Mike made a jest, wherein
Some wanton innuendo lurked and leered,
About the Long Knife's girl. The place went weird
With sudden silence as the tall man strode
Across the room, nor lacked an open road
Among the men. A glitter in his stare
Belied the smile he bore; and, pausing there
With stiffened index finger raised and held
Before the jester's eyes, as though he spelled
The slow words out, he said: "We'll have no jokes
In just that way about our women folks!"
And Fink guffawed.

They would have fought again,
Had not the Major stepped between the men
And talked the crisis by. And when 'twas past,
Talbeau, intent to end the strife at last,
Somehow persuaded Fink to make amends,
And, as a proof that henceforth they were friends,

Proposed the shooting of the whisky cup.
"Shure, b'y," said Mike, "we'll toss a copper up
And if 'tis heads I'll thry me cunning first.
As fer me joke, the tongue of me is cursed
Wid double j'ints — so let it be forgot!"
And so it was agreed.

They cleared a spot
And flipped a coin that tinkled as it fell.
A tiny sound — yet, like a midnight bell
That sets wild faces pressing at the pane,
Talbeau would often hear that coin again,
In vivid dreams, to waken terrified.
'Twas heads.

And now the tall man stepped aside
And, beckoning Talbeau, he whispered: "Son,
If anything should happen, keep my gun
For old time's sake. And when the Major pays
In old St. Louis, drink to better days
When friends were friends, with what he's owing me."
Whereat the little man laughed merrily
And said: "Old Horse, you're off your feed to-day;
But if you've sworn an oath to blow your pay,

I guess the three of us can make it good!
Mike couldn't miss a target if he would."
"Well, maybe so," said Carpenter, and smiled.

A windless noon was brooding on the wild
And in the clearing, eager for the show,
The waiting trappers chatted. Now Talbeau
Stepped off the range. The tall man took his place,
The grin of some droll humor on his face;
And when his friend was reaching for his head
To set the brimming cup thereon, he said:
"You won't forget I gave my gun to you
And all my blankets and my fixin's too?"
The small man laughed and, turning round, he cried:
"We're ready, Mike!"

A murmur ran and died
Along the double line of eager men.
Fink raised his gun, but set it down again
And blew a breath and said: "I'm gittin' dhry!
So howld yer noddle shtiddy, Bill, me b'y,
And don't ye shpill me whisky!" Cedar-straight
The tall man stood, the calm of brooding Fate
About him. Aye, and often to the end
Talbeau would see that vision of his friend —

A man-flower springing from the fresh green sod,
While, round about, the bushes burned with God
And mating peewees fluted in the brush.

They heard a gun lock clicking in the hush.
They saw Fink sighting — heard the rifle crack,
And saw beneath the spreading powder rack
The tall man pitching forward.

Echoes fled
Like voices in a panic. Then Mike said:
"Bejasus, and ye've shpilled me whisky, Bill!"

A catbird screamed. The crowd stood very still
As though bewitched.

"And can't ye hear?" bawled Fink;
"I say, I'm dhry — and now ye've shpilled me drink!"
He stooped to blow the gasses from his gun.

And now men saw Talbeau. They saw him run
And stoop to peer upon the prostrate man
Where now the mingling blood and whisky ran
From oozing forehead and the tilted cup.
And in the hush a sobbing cry grew up:
"My God! You've killed him, Mike!"

Then growing loud,
A wind of horror blew among the crowd
And set it swirling round about the dead.
And over all there roared a voice that said:
"I niver mint to do it, b'ys, I swear!
The divil's in me gun!" Men turned to stare
Wild-eyed upon the center of that sound,
And saw Fink dash his rifle to the ground,
As 'twere the hated body of his wrong.

Once more arose that wailing, like a song,
Of one who called and called upon his friend.

VII

THE THIRD RIDER

It seemed the end, and yet 'twas not the end.
A day that wind of horror and surprise
Blew high; and then, as when the tempest dies
And only aspens prattle, as they will,
Though pines win silence and the oaks are still,
By furtive twos and threes the talk survived.
To some it seemed that men were longer lived
Who quarreled not over women. Others guessed
That love was bad for marksmanship at best —
The nerves, you know! Still others pointed out
Why Mike should have the benefit of doubt;
For every man, who knew a rifle, knew
That there were days you'd split a reed in two,
Off-hand at fifty paces; then, one day,
Why, somehow, damn your eyes, you'd blaze away
And miss a bull! No doubt regarding that!
"But," one replied, "'tis what you're aiming at,
Not what you hit, determines skill, you know!"—
An abstract observation, apropos

Of nothing in particular, but made
As just a contribution to the trade
Of gunnery! And others would recall
The center of that silence in the hall
The night one lay there waiting, splendid, still,
And nothing left to wait for. Poor old Bill!
There went a man, by God! Who knew his like —
So meek in might? And some remembered Mike —
The hearth-lit room — the way he came to look
Upon that face — and how his shoulders shook
With sobbing as he moaned: "My friend! My friend!"

It seemed the end, and yet 'twas not the end,
Though men cared less to know what cunning gnome
Or eyeless thing of doom had ridden home
The deadly slug. And then there came a day
When Major Henry had a word to say
That seemed, at last, to lay the ghost to rest.
He meant to seek the River of the West
Beyond the range, immensely rich in furs,
And for the wiving prows of *voyageurs*
A virgin yearning. Yonder one might glide
A thousand miles to sunset, where the tide

Is tempered with an endless dream of May!
So much and more the Major had to say —
Words big with magic for the young men's ears.
And finally he called for volunteers —
Two men to hasten to the Moreau's mouth,
Meet Ashley's party coming from the south
And bid them buy more horses at the Grand
Among the Rees. Then, pushing through the band,
Mike Fink stood forth, and after him, Talbeau.

Now Henry thought 'twere wiser they should go
By land, although the river trail, he knew,
Were better. But a wind of rumor blew
Up stream. About the region of the Knife,
It seemed, the Grovans tarried, nursing strife
Because the Whites were favoring their foes
With trade for guns; and, looking on their bows,
The Grovans hated. So the rumor said.
And thus it came to pass the new trail led
About six days by pony to the south;
Thence eastward, five should find the Moreau's mouth
And Ashley toiling up among the bars.

The still white wind was blowing out the stars
When yawning trappers saw the two men row
Across the river with their mounts in tow —
A red roan stallion and a buckskin mare.
And now the ponies gain the far bank there
And flounder up and shake themselves like dogs.
And now the riders mount and breast the fogs
Flung down as wool upon the flat. They dip
And rise and float, submerging to the hip,
Turn slowly into shadow men, and fade.
And some have said that when the ponies neighed,
'Twas like a strangled shriek; and far ahead
Some ghostly pony, ridden by the dead,
Called onward like a bugle singing doom.
And when the valley floor, as with a broom,
Was swept by dawn, men saw the empty land.

Not now the Song shall tell of Henry's band
Ascending to the Falls, nor how they crossed
The Blackfoot trail, nor how they fought and lost,
Thrown back upon the Yellowstone to wait
In vain for Ashley's hundred. Yonder, Fate
Led southward through the fog, and thither goes
The prescient Song.

The April sun arose
And fell; and all day long the riders faced
A rolling, treeless, melancholy waste
Of yellow grass; for 'twas a rainless time,
Nor had the baby green begun to climb
The steep-kneed hills, but kept the nursing draws.
And knee to knee they rode with scarce a pause,
Save when the ponies drank; and scarce a word,
As though the haunting silence of a third,
Who rode between them, shackled either tongue.
And when along the sloughs the twilight flung
Blue haze, and made the hills seem doubly bleak,
They camped beside a songless little creek
That crawled among the clumps of stunted plum
Just coming into bud. And both sat dumb
Beside a mewing fire, until the west
Was darkened and the shadows leaped and pressed
About their little ring of feeble light.
Then, moved by some vague menace in the night,
Fink forced a laugh that wasn't glad at all,
And joked about a certain saddle gall
That troubled him — a Rabelaisian quip
That in the good old days had served to strip
The drooping humor from the dourest jowl.
He heard the laughter of the prairie owl,

A goblin jeering. Gazing at the flame,
Talbeau seemed not to hear. But when there
came
A cry of kiotes, peering all about
He said: "You don't suppose they'll dig him
out?
I carried heavy stones till break of day.
You don't suppose they'll come and paw away
The heavy stones I packed, and pester Bill?"
"Huh uh," Fink grunted; but the evening chill
Seemed doubled on a sudden; so he sought
His blanket, wrapped it closely, thought and
thought
Till drowsy nonsense tumbled through his skull.

Now at that time of night when comes a lull
On stormy life; when even sorrow sleeps,
And sentinels upon the stellar steeps
Sight morning, though the world is blind and
dumb,
Fink wakened at a whisper: "Mike! He's come!
Look! Look!" And Mike sat up and blinked
and saw.
It didn't walk — it burned along the draw —
Tall, radiantly white! It wasn't dead —
It smiled — it had a tin cup on its head —
Eh? — Gone!

Fink stirred the embers to a flare.
What dream was this? The world seemed unaware
That anything at all had come to pass.
Contentedly the ponies nipped the grass
There in the darkness; and the night was still.
They slept no more, but nursed the fire until
The morning broke; then ate and rode away.

They weren't any merrier that day.
And each spoke little, save when Fink would swear
And smirch the virtue of the buckskin mare
For picking quarrels with the roan he rode.
(Did not the Northwind nag her like a goad,
And was there any other horse to blame?)

The worried day dragged on and twilight came —
A dusty gray. They climbed a hill to seek
Some purple fringe of brush that marked a creek.
The prairie seemed an endless yellow blur:
Nor might they choose but tarry where they were
And pass the cheerless night as best they could,
For they had seen no water-hole or wood
Since when the sun was halfway down the sky;
And there would be no stars to travel by,
So thick a veil of dust the great wind wove.
They staked their ponies in a leeward cove,
And, rolling in their blankets, swooned away.

Talbeau awoke and stared. 'Twas breaking
day!
So soon? It seemed he scarce had slept a wink!
He'd have another snooze, for surely Fink
Seemed far from waking, sprawled upon the
ground,
His loose mouth gaping skyward with a sound
As of a bucksaw grumbling through a knot.
Talbeau dropped back and dreamed the sun was
hot
Upon his face. He tried but failed to stir;
Whereat he knew that he was Carpenter
And hot-breatht wolves were sniffing round his
head!
He wasn't dead! He really wasn't dead!
Would no one come, would no one drive them off?
His cry for help was nothing but a cough,
For something choked him. Then a shrill long
scream
Cut knife-like through the shackles of his dream,
And once again he saw the lurid flare
Of morning on the hills.

What ailed the mare?
She strained her tether, neighing. And the
roan?
He squatted, trembling, with his head upthrown,

And lashed his tail and snorted at the blast.
Perhaps some prowling grizzly wandered past.
Talbeau sat up. What stifling air! How warm!
What sound was that? Perhaps a thunder storm
Was working up. He coughed; and then it broke
Upon him how the air was sharp with smoke;
And, leaping up, he turned and looked and knew
What birdless dawn, unhallowed by the dew,
Came raging from the northwest! Half the earth
And half the heavens were a burning hearth
Fed fat with grass inflammable as tow!
He shook Fink, yelling: "Mike, we've got to go!
All hell's broke loose!"

They cinched the saddles on
With hands that fumbled; mounted and were gone,
Like rabbits fleeing from a kiote pack.
They crossed the valley, topped a rise, looked back,
Nor dared to gaze. The firm, familiar world,
It seemed, was melting down, and Chaos swirled
Once more across the transient realms of form
To scatter in the primal atom-storm

The earth's rich dust and potency of dreams.
Infernal geysers gushed, and sudden streams
Of rainbow flux went roaring up the skies
Through ghastly travesties of Paradise,
Where, drowsy in a tropic summertide,
Strange gaudy flowers bloomed and aged and died —
Whole seasons in a moment. Bloody rain,
Blown slant like April silver, spewed the plain
To mock the fallow sod; and where it fell
Anemones and violets of hell
Foreran the fatal summer.

Spurs bit deep.
Now down the hill where shadow-haunted sleep
Fell from the broken wind's narcotic breath,
The ponies plunged. A sheltered draw, where death
Seemed brooding in the silence, heard them pass.
A hollow, deep with tangled jointed grass,
Snatched at the frantic hoofs. Now up a slope
They clambered, blowing, at a stumbling lope
And, reined upon the summit, wheeled to stare.
The stallion snorted, and the rearing mare
Screamed at the sight and bolted down the wind.
The writhing Terror, scarce a mile behind,

Appeared to gain; while far to left and right
Its flanks seemed bending in upon the night —
A ten-league python closing on its prey.

No guiding hand was needed for the way;
Blind speed was all. So little Nature heeds
The fate of men, these blew as tumbleweeds
Before that dwarfing, elemental rage.
A gray wolf bounded from a clump of sage;
A rabbit left its bunchgrass nest and ran
Beside its foe; and neither dreaded Man,
The deadliest of all earth's preying things.
A passing knoll exploded into wings,
And prairie owls, befuddled by the light,
Went tumbling up like patches of the night
The burning tempest tattered.

Leaning low,
The gasping riders let the ponies go,
The little buckskin leading, while the roan
Strove hard a-flank, afraid to be alone
And nickering at whiles. And he who led,
By brief hypnotic lapses comforted,
Recalled the broad Ohio, heard the horns
The way they used to sing those summer morns
When he and Mike and —. There the dream
went wrong
And through his head went running, like a song

That sings itself: 'He tried so hard to come
And warn us; but the grave had made him dumb,
And 'twas to show he loved us that he smiled.'
And of the other terror made a child
Whom often, for a panic moment's span,
Projections from the conscience of the man
Pursued with glaring eyes and claws of flame.
For this the dead arose, for this he came —
That grin upon his face!

A blinding gloom
Crushed down; then, followed by a rolling boom,
There broke a scarlet hurricane of light
That swept the farthest reaches of the night
Where unsuspected hills leaped up aghast.
Already through the hollow they had passed
So recently, the hounding Terror sped!
And now the wind grew hotter. Overhead
Inverted seas of color rolled and broke,
And from the combers of the litten smoke
A stinging spindrift showered.

On they went,
Unconscious of duration or extent,
Of everything but that from which they fled.
Now, sloping to an ancient river bed,

The prairie flattened. Plunging downward there,
The riders suddenly became aware
How surged, beneath, a mighty shadow-stream —
As though the dying Prairie dreamed a dream
Of yesterage when all her valleys flowed
With Amazons, and monster life abode
Upon her breast and quickened in her womb.
And from that rushing in the flame-smeared
gloom
Unnumbered outcries blended in a roar.
The headlong ponies struck the sounding shore
And reared upon their haunches. Far and near,
The valley was a-flood with elk and deer
And buffalo and wolves and antelope
And whatsoever creature slough and slope
Along the path of terror had to give.
Torrential with the common will to live,
The river of unnumbered egos swept
The ponies with it. But the buckskin kept
The margin where the rabble frayed and thinned
And, breathing with the wheeze of broken wind,
The stallion clung to her.

It came to pass
The valley yawned upon a sea of grass
That seemed to heave, as waves of gloom and glare
Ran over it; and, rising here and there,

Tall buttes made islands in the living tide
That roared about them. Still with swinging stride
And rhythmic breath the little buckskin ran
Among the herd, that opened like a fan
And scattered. But the roan was losing ground.
His breathing gave a gurgling, hollow sound,
As though his life were gushing from his throat.
His whole frame quivered like a scuttled boat
That slowly sinks; nor did he seem to feel
Upon his flank the biting of the steel
That made him bleed. Fink cut the rifle-boot
And saddle-bags away, to give the brute
Less burden.

Now it happened, as they neared
A lofty butte whose summit glimmered weird
Beneath the lurid boiling of the sky,
Talbeau was startled by a frantic cry
Behind him; noted that he rode alone,
And, turning in the saddle, saw the roan
Go stumbling down and wither to a heap.
And momently, between a leap and leap,
The love of self was mighty in the man;
For now the Terror left the hills and ran
With giant strides along the grassy plains.
Dear Yesterdays fought wildly for the reins,

To-morrows for the spur. And then the mare
Heeled to the sawing bit and pawed the air
And halted, prancing.

Once again Talbeau
Looked back to where the sparks were blown as
snow
Before that blizzard blast of scorching light,
And saw Fink running down the painted night
Like some lost spirit fleeing from the Wrath.

One horse — and who should ride it? All he
hath
A man will give for life! But shall he give
For living that which makes it good to live —
The consciousness of fellowship and trust?
Let fools so prize a pinch of throbbing dust!
Now Fink should ride, and let the rest be hid.
He bounded from the mare, but, as he did,
The panic-stricken pony wheeled about,
Won freedom with a lunge, and joined the
rout
Of fleeing shadows.

Well, 'twas over now —
Perhaps it didn't matter anyhow —
They'd go together now and hunt for Bill!
And momently the world seemed very still

About Talbeau. Then Fink was at his side,
Blank horror in his face. "Come on!" he cried;
"The butte! We'll climb the butte!" And once again
Talbeau knew fear.

Now, gripping hands, the men
Scuttled and dodged athwart the scattered flight
Of shapes that drifted in the flood of light,
A living flotsam; reached the bare butte's base,
Went scrambling up its leaning leeward face
To where the slope grew sheer, and huddled there.
And hotter, hotter, hotter grew the air,
Until their temples sang a fever tune.
The April night became an August noon.
Then, near to swooning in a blast of heat,
They heard the burning breakers boom and beat
About their lofty island, as they lay,
Their gaping mouths pressed hard against the clay,
And fought for every breath. Nor could they tell
How long upon a blistered scarp in hell
They gasped and clung. But suddenly at last —
An age in passing, and a moment, passed —
The torture ended, and the cool air came;
And, looking out, they saw the long slant flame
Devour the night to leeward.

By and by
Drab light came seeping through the sullen sky.
They waited there until the morning broke,
And, like a misty moon amid the smoke,
The sun came stealing up.

They found a place
Where rain had scarred the butte wall's western face
With many runnels; clambered upward there —
And viewed a panorama of despair.
The wind had died, and not a sound arose
Above those blackened leagues; for even crows
(The solitude embodied in a bird)
Had fled that desolation. Nothing stirred,
Save here and there a thin gray column grew
From where some draw still smouldered. And they knew
How universal quiet may appal
As violence, and, even as a wall,
Sheer vacancy confine.

No horse, no gun!
Nay, worse; no hint of water hole or run
In all the flat or back among the hills!
Mere hunger is a goad that, ere it kills,
May drive the lean far down the hardest road:
But thirst is both a snaffle and a load;

It gripped them now. When Mike made bold to
speak,
His tongue was like a stranger to his cheek.
"Shure, b'y," he croaked; "'tis Sunday morn in
hell!"
The sound seemed profanation; on it fell
The vast, rebuking silence.

Long they gazed
About them, standing silent and amazed
Upon the summit. West and north and east
They saw too far. But mystery, at least,
Was in the south, where still the smoke con-
cealed
The landscape. Vistas of the unrevealed
Invited Hope to stray there as it please.
And presently there came a little breeze
Out of the dawn. As of a crowd that waits
Some imminent revealment of the Fates
That toil behind the scenes, a murmur 'woke
Amid the hollow hush. And now the smoke
Mysteriously stirs, begins to flow,
And giant shadow bulks that loom below
Seem crowding dawnward. One by one they lift
Above the reek, and trail the ragged drift
About their flanks. A melancholy scene!
Gray buttes and giddy gulfs that yawn between —

A Titan's labyrinth! But see afar
Where yonder canyon like a purple scar
Cuts zigzag through the waste! Is that a gleam
Of water in its deeps?

A stream! A stream!

Now scrambling down the runnels of the rain,
They struck across the devastated plain
Where losers of the night's mad race were strewn
To wait the wolves and crows.

Mid-afternoon
Beheld them stripping at the river's bank.
They wallowed in the turbid stream and drank
Delicious beakers in the liquid mud;
Nor drank alone, for here the burning flood
Had flung its panting driftage in the dark.
The valley teemed with life, as though some Ark
That rode the deluge, spewed its cargo here:
Elk, antelope, wolves, bison, rabbits, deer,
Owls, crows — the greatest mingled with the least.
And when the men had drunk, they had a feast
Of liver, bolted dripping from a cow
Dead at the water's lip.

Blue shadow now
Was mounting slowly up the canyon steep;
So, seeking for a better place to sleep,

They wandered down the margin of the stream.
'Twas scarce more real than walking in a dream
Of lonely craters in a lunar land
That never thrilled with roots. On either hand
The dwarfing summits soared, grotesque, austere,
And jaggéd fissures, sentinelled with fear,
Led back to mysteries of purple gloom.

They came to where a coulee, like a flume,
Rose steeply to the prairie. Thither hurled,
A roaring freshet of the herd had swirled,
Cascading to the river bed; and there,
Among the trampelled carcasses, the mare
Lay bloated near the water. She had run
With saddle, panniers, powder-horn and gun
Against the wind-thewed fillies of the fire,
And won the heat, to perish at the wire —
A plucky little brute!

VIII

VENGEANCE

They made a camp
Well up above the crawling valley damp,
And where no prowling beast might chance to
come.
There was no fuel; but a flask of rum,
Thanks to the buckskin, dulled the evening chill.
And both grew mellow. Memories of Bill
And other nights possessed the little man;
And on and on his reminiscence ran,
As 'twere the babble of a brook of tears
Gone groping for the ocean of dead years
Too far away to reach. And by and by
The low voice sharpened to an anguished cry:
"O Mike! I said you couldn't miss the cup!"

Then something snapped in Fink and, leaping up,
He seized Talbeau and shook him as a rat
Is shaken by a dog. "Enough of that!"
He yelled; "And, 'faith, I'll sind ye afther Bill
Fer wan more wurrd! Ye fool! I mint to kill!
And, moind me now, ye'd better howld yer lip!"

Talbeau felt murder shudder in the grip
That choked and shook and flung him. Faint
and dazed,
He sprawled upon the ground. And anger blazed
Within him, like the leaping Northern Light
That gives no heat. He wished to rise and
fight,
But could not for the horror of it all.
Wild voices thronged the further canyon wall
As Fink raved on; and every word he said
Was like a mutilation of the dead
By some demonic mob.

And when at length
He heard Mike snoring yonder, still the strength
To rise and kill came not upon Talbeau.
So many moments of the Long Ago
Came pleading; and the gentle might thereof
United with the habit of old love
To weave a spell about the sleeping man.
Then drowsily the pondered facts began
To merge and group, as running colors will,
In new and vaguer patterns. Mike and Bill
Were bickering again. And someone said:
"Let's flip a copper; if it's tails, he's dead;
If heads, he's living. That's the way to tell!"
A spinning copper jangled like a bell.

But even as he stooped to pick it up,
Behold! the coin became a whisky cup
Bored smoothly through the center! "Look at this!"
He seemed to shout: "I knew Mike couldn't miss!
Bill only played at dying for a joke!"

Then laughter filled his dream, and he awoke.
The dawn was like a stranger's cold regard
Across the lifeless land, grotesquely scarred
As by old sorrow; and the man's dull sense
Of woe, become objective and immense,
Seemed waiting there to crush him.

Fink still slept;
And even now, it seemed, his loose mouth kept
A shape for shameless words, as though a breath,
Deep drawn, might set it gloating o'er the death
Of one who loved its jesting and its song.
And while Talbeau sat pondering the wrong
So foully done, and all that had been killed,
And how the laughter of the world was stilled
And all its wine poured out, he seemed to hear
As though a spirit whispered in his ear:
You won't forget I gave my gun to you!
And instantly the deep conviction grew

That 'twas a plea for justice from the slain.
Ah, not without a hand upon the rein,
Nor with an empty saddle, had the mare
Outrun the flame that she might carry there
The means of vengeance!

Yet — if Mike were dead!
He shuddered, gazing where the gray sky bled
With morning, like a wound. He couldn't kill;
Nor did it seem to be the way of Bill
To bid him do it. Yet the gun was sent.
For what? — To make Mike suffer and repent?
But how?

Awhile his apathetic gaze
Explored yon thirst- and hunger-haunted maze,
As though he might surprise the answer there.
The answer came. That region of despair
Should be Mike's Purgatory! More than Chance
Had fitted circumstance to circumstance
That this should be! He knew it! And the plan,
Thus suddenly conceived, possessed the man.
It seemed the might of Bill had been reborn
In him.

He took the gun and powder horn,
The water flasks and sun-dried bison meat
The panniers gave; then climbing to a seat

Above the sleeper, shouted down to him:
"Get up!" Along the further canyon rim
A multitude of voices swelled the shout.
Fink started up and yawned and looked about,
Bewildered. Once again the clamor ran
Along the canyon wall. The little man,
Now squinting down the pointed rifle, saw
The lifted face go pale, the stubborn jaw
Droop nervelessly. A twinge of pity stirred
Within him, and he marvelled as he heard
His own voice saying what he wished unsaid:
"It's Bill's own rifle pointing at your head;
Go east, and think of all the wrong you've done!"

Fink glanced across his shoulder where the sun
Shone level on the melancholy land;
And, feigning that he didn't understand,
Essayed a careless grin that went awry.
"Bejasus, and we'll not go there, me b'y,"
He said; "for shure 'tis hell widout the lights!"
That one-eyed stare along the rifle sights
Was narrowed to a slit. A sickening shock
Ran through him at the clucking of the lock.
He clutched his forehead, stammering: "Tal beau,
I've been yer frind —."

"I'll give you three to go,"
The other said, "or else you'll follow Bill!
One — two —."

Fink turned and scuttled down the hill;
And at the sight the watcher's eyes grew dim,
For something old and dear had gone from him —
His pride in one who made a clown of Death.
Alas, how much the man would give for breath!
How easily Death made of him the clown!

Now scrambling for a grip, now rolling down,
Mike landed at the bottom of the steep,
And, plunging in the river belly deep,
Struck out in terror for the other shore.
At any moment might the rifle's roar
Crash through that rearward silence, and the lead
Come snarling like a hornet at his head —
He felt the spot! Then presently the flood
Began to cool the fever in his blood,
And furtive self-derision stung his pride.
He clambered dripping up the further side
And felt himself a fool! He wouldn't go!
That little whiffet yonder was Talbeau!
And who was this that he, Mike Fink, had feared?
He'd go and see.

A spurt of smoke appeared
Across the river, and a bullet struck —
Spat ping — beside him, spewing yellow muck
Upon his face. Then every cliff and draw
Rehearsed the sullen thunders of the law
He dared to question. Stricken strangely weak,
He clutched the clay and watched the powder reek
Trail off with glories of the level sun.
He saw Talbeau pour powder in his gun
And ram the wad. A second shot might kill!
That brooding like a woman over Bill
Had set the fellow daft. *A crazy man!*
The notion spurred him. Springing up, he ran
To where a gully cleft the canyon rim
And, with that one-eyed fury after him,
Fled east.

The very buttes, grotesque and weird,
Seemed startled at the sight of what he feared
And powerless to shield him in his need.
'Twas more than man he fled from; 'twas a deed,
Become alive and subtle as the air,
That turned upon the doer. Everywhere
It gibbered in the echoes as he fled.
A stream of pictures flitted through his head:
The quiet body in the hearth-lit hall,
The grinning ghost, the flight, the stallion's fall,

The flame girt isle, the spectral morning sun,
And then the finding of the dead man's gun
Beside the glooming river. Flowing by,
These fused and focused in the deadly eye
He felt behind him.

Suddenly the ground
Heaved up and smote him with a crashing sound;
And in the vivid moment of his fall
He thought he heard the snarling rifle ball
And felt the one-eyed fury crunch its mark.
Expectant of the swooping of the dark,
He raised his eyes. — The sun was shining still;
It peeped about the shoulder of a hill
And viewed him with a quizzifying stare.
He looked behind him. Nothing followed there;
But Silence, big with dread-begotten sound,
Dismayed him; and the steeps that hemmed him round
Seemed plotting with a more than human guile.
He rose and fled; but every little while
A sense of eyes behind him made him pause;
And always down the maze of empty draws
It seemed a sound of feet abruptly ceased.

Now trotting, walking now, he labored east;
And when at length the burning zenith beat
Upon him, and the summits swam with heat,
And on the winding gullies fell no shade,
He came to where converging gulches made
A steep-walled basin for the blinding glare.
Here, fanged and famished, crawled the prickly pear;
Malevolent with thirst, the soap weed thrust
Its barbed stilettos from the arid dust,
Defiant of the rain-withholding blue:
And in the midst a lonely scrub oak grew,
A crooked dwarf that, in the pictured bog
Of its own shadow, squatted like a frog.
Fink, panting, flung himself beneath its boughs.
A mighty magic in the noonday drowse
Allayed the driving fear. A waking dream
Fulfilled a growing wish. He saw the stream
Far off as from a space-commanding height.
And now a phantasy of rapid flight
Transported him above the sagging land,
And with a sudden swoop he seemed to stand
Once more upon the shimmering river's brink.
His eyes drank deep; but when his mouth would drink,
A giant hornet from the other shore —
The generating center of a roar
That shook the world — snarled by.

He started up,
And saw the basin filling as a cup
With purple twilight! Gazing all around
Where still the flitting ghost of some great sound
Troubled the crags a moment, then was mute,
He saw along the shoulder of a butte,
A good three hundred paces from the oak,
A slowly spreading streak of rifle smoke
And knew the deadly eye was lurking there.
He fled again.

About him everywhere
Amid the tangled draws now growing dim,
Weird witnesses took cognizance of him
And told abroad the winding way he ran.
He halted only when his breath began
To stab his throat. And lo, the staring eye
Was quenched with night! No further need he fly
Till dawn. And yet —. He held his breath to hear
If footsteps followed. Silence smote his ear,
The gruesome silence of the hearth-lit hall,
More dread than sound. Against the gully wall
He shrank and huddled with his eyes shut tight,
For fear a presence, latent in the night,
Should walk before him.

Then it seemed he ran
Through regions alien to the feet of Man,
A weary way despite the speed of sleep,
And came upon a river flowing deep
Between black crags that made the sky a well.
And eerily the feeble starlight fell
Upon the flood with water lilies strown.
But when he stooped, the stream began to moan,
And suddenly from every lily pad
A white face bloomed, unutterably sad
And bloody browed.

A swift, erasing flame
Across the dusky picture, morning came.
Mike lay a moment, blinking at the blue;
And then the fear of yesterday broke through
The clinging drowse. For lo, on every side
The paling summits watched him, Argus-eyed,
In hushed anticipation of a roar.
He fled.

All day, intent to see once more
The open plain before the night should fall,
He labored on. But many a soaring wall
Annulled some costly distance he had won;
And misdirected gullies, white with sun,
Seemed spitefully to baffle his desire.

The deeps went blue; on mimic dome and spire
The daylight faded to a starry awe.
Mike slept; and lo, they marched along the draw —
Or rather burned — tall, radiantly white!
A hushed procession, tunnelling the night,
They came, with lips that smiled and brows that bled,
And each one bore a tin cup on its head,
A brimming cup. But ever as they came
Before him, like a draught-struck candle flame
They shuddered and were snuffed.

'Twas deep night yet
When Mike awoke and felt the terror sweat
Upon his face, the prickling of his hair.
Afraid to sleep, he paced the gully there
Until the taller buttes were growing gray.
He brooded much on flowing streams that day.
As with a weight, he stooped; his feet were slow;
He shuffled. Less and less he feared Talbeau
Behind him. More and more he feared the night
Before him. Any hazard in the light,
Or aught that might befall 'twixt living men,
Were better than to be alone again
And meet that dream!

The deeps began to fill
With purple haze. Bewildered, boding ill,
A moaning wind awoke. 'Twould soon be dark.
Mike pondered. Twice Talbeau had missed the
mark.
Perhaps he hadn't really meant to hit.
And surely now that flaring anger fit
Had burned away. It wasn't like the man
To hold a grudge. Mike halted, and began
To grope for words regretful of the dead,
Persuasive words about a heart that bled
For Bill. 'Twas all a terrible mistake.
"Plase now, a little dhrop fer owld toime's sake!"
With troublesome insistence, that refrain
Kept running through the muddle of his brain
And disarranged the words he meant to speak.
The trickle of a tear along his cheek
Consoled him. Soon his suffering would end.
Talbeau would see him weeping for his friend —
Talbeau had water!

Now the heights burned red
To westward. With a choking clutch of dread
He noted how the dusk was gathering
Along the draws — a trap about to spring.
He cupped his hands about his mouth and cried:
"Talbeau! Talbeau!" Despairing voices died

Among the summits, and the lost wind pined.
It made Talbeau seem infinitely kind —
The one thing human in a ghostly land.
Where was he? Just a touch of that warm hand
Would thwart the dark! Mike sat against a wall
And brooded.

By and by a skittering fall
Of pebbles at his back aroused the man.
He scrambled to his feet and turned to scan
The butte that sloped above him. Where the glow
Still washed the middle height, he saw Talbeau
Serenely perched upon a ledge of clay!
And Mike forgot the words he meant to say,
The fitted words, regretful of his deed.
A forthright, stark sincerity of need
Rough hewed the husky, incoherent prayer
He shouted to that Lord of water there
Above the gloom. A little drop to drink
For old time's sake!

Talbeau regarded Fink
Awhile in silence; then his thin lips curled.
"You spilled the only drink in all the world!
Go on," he said, "and think of what you've done!"
Beyond the pointed muzzle of his gun

He saw the big man wither to a squat
And tremble, like a bison when the shot
Just nips the vital circle. Then he saw
A stooping figure hurry down the draw,
Grow dim, and vanish in the failing light.

'Twas long before Talbeau could sleep that night.
Some questioner, insistently perverse,
Assailed him and compelled him to rehearse
The justifying story of the friend
Betrayed and slain. But when he reached the end,
Still unconvinced the questioner was there
To taunt him with that pleading of despair —
For old time's sake! Sleep brought him little rest;
For what the will denied, the heart confessed
In mournful dreams. And when the first faint gray
Aroused him, and he started on his way,
He knew the stubborn questioner had won.
No brooding on the wrong that Mike had done
Could still that cry: "Plase now, fer owld toime's sake,
A little dhrop!" It made his eyeballs ache
With tears of pity that he couldn't shed.
No other dawn, save that when Bill lay dead

And things began to stare about the hall,
Had found the world so empty. After all,
What man could know the way another trod?
And who was he, Talbeau, to play at God?
Let one who curbs the wind and brews the rain
Essay the subtler portioning of pain
To souls that err! Talbeau would make amends!
Once more they'd drink together and be friends.
How often they had shared!

He struck a trot,
Eyes fixed upon the trail. The sun rose hot;
Noon poured a blinding glare along the draws;
And still the trail led on, without a pause
To show where Mike had rested. Thirst began
To be a burden on the little man;
His progress dwindled to a dragging pace.
But when he tipped the flask, that pleading face
Arose before him, and a prayer denied
Came mourning back to thrust his need aside —
A little drop! How Mike must suffer now!
"I'm not so very thirsty, anyhow,"
He told himself. And almost any bend
Might bring him on a sudden to his friend.
He'd wait and share the water.

Every turn
Betrayed a hope. The west began to burn;
Flared red; went ashen; and the stars came out.
Dreams, colored by an unacknowledged doubt,
Perplexed the trail he followed in his sleep;
And dreary hours before the tallest steep
Saw dawn, Talbeau was waiting for the day.

Till noon he read a writing in the clay
That bade him haste; for now from wall to wall
The footmarks wandered, like the crabbéd scrawl
An old man writes. They told a gloomy tale.
And then the last dim inkling of a trail
Was lost upon a patch of hardened ground!

The red west saw him, like a nervous hound
That noses vainly for the vanished track,
Still plunging into gullies, doubling back,
And pausing now and then to hurl a yell
Among the ululating steeps. Night fell.
The starlit buttes still heard him panting by,
And summits weird with midnight caught his cry
To answer, mocking.

Morning brought despair;
Nor did he get much comfort of his prayer:
"God, let me find him! Show me where to go!"
Some greater, unregenerate Talbeau

Was God that morning; for the lesser heard
His own bleak answer echoed word for word:
Go on, and think of all the wrong you've done!

His futile wish to hasten sped the sun.
That day, as he recalled it in the dark,
Was like the spinning of a burning arc.
He nodded, and the night was but a swoon;
And morning neighbored strangely with the noon;
And evening was the noon's penumbral haze.

No further ran the reckoning of days.
'Twas evening when at last he stooped to stare
Upon a puzzling trail. A wounded bear,
It seemed, had dragged its rump across the sands
That floored the gullies now. But sprawling hands
Had marked the margin! Why was that? No doubt
Mike too had tarried here to puzzle out
What sort of beast had passed. And yet — how queer —
'Twas plain no human feet had trodden here!
A trail of hands! That throbbing in his brain
Confused his feeble efforts to explain;
And hazily he wondered if he slept
And dreamed again. Tenaciously he kept

His eyes upon the trail and labored on,
Lest, swooping like a hawk, another dawn
Should snatch that hope away.

A sentry crow,
Upon a sunlit summit, saw Talbeau
And croaked alarm. The noise of many wings,
In startled flight, and raucous chatterings
Arose. What feast was interrupted there
A little way ahead? 'Twould be the bear!
He plodded on. The intervening space
Sagged under him; and, halting at the place
Where late the flock had been, he strove to break
A grip of horror. Surely now he'd wake
And see the morning quicken in the skies!

The thing remained! — It hadn't any eyes —
The pilfered sockets bore a pleading stare!

A long, hoarse wail of anguish and despair
Aroused the echoes. Answering, arose
Once more the jeering chorus of the crows.

THE SONG OF HUGH GLASS

TO SIGURD, SCARCELY THREE

When you are old enough to know
The joys of kite and boat and bow
And other suchlike splendid things
That boyhood's rounded decade brings,
I shall not give you tropes and rhymes;
But, rising to those rousing times,
I shall ply well the craft I know
Of shaping kite and boat and bow,
For you shall teach me once again
The goodly art of being ten.

Meanwhile, as on a rainy day
When 'tis not possible to play,
The while you do your best to grow
I ply the other craft I know
And strive to build for you the mood
Of daring and of fortitude
With fitted word and shapen phrase,
Against those later wonder-days
When first you glimpse the world of men
Beyond the bleaker side of ten.

SONG OF HUGH GLASS

I

GRAYBEARD AND GOLDHAIR

The year was eighteen hundred twenty three.

'Twas when the guns that blustered at the Ree
Had ceased to brag, and ten score martial clowns
Retreated from the unwhipped river towns,
Amid the scornful laughter of the Sioux.
A withering blast the arid South still blew,
And creeks ran thin beneath the glaring sky;
For 'twas a month ere honking geese would fly
Southward before the Great White Hunter's face:
And many generations of their race,
As bow-flung arrows, now have fallen spent.

It happened then that Major Henry went
With eighty trappers up the dwindling Grand,
Bound through the weird, unfriending barren-land
For where the Big Horn meets the Yellowstone;
And old Hugh Glass went with them.
Large of bone,

Deep-chested, that his great heart might have play,
Gray-bearded, gray of eye and crowned with gray
Was Glass. It seemed he never had been young;
And, for the grudging habit of his tongue,
None knew the place or season of his birth.
Slowly he 'woke to anger or to mirth;
Yet none laughed louder when the rare mood fell,
And hate in him was like a still, white hell,
A thing of doom not lightly reconciled.
What memory he kept of wife or child
Was never told; for when his comrades sat
About the evening fire with pipe and chat,
Exchanging talk of home and gentler days,
Old Hugh stared long upon the pictured blaze,
And what he saw went upward in the smoke.

But once, as with an inner lightning stroke,
The veil was rent, and briefly men discerned
What pent-up fires of selfless passion burned
Beneath the still gray smoldering of him.
There was a rakehell lad, called Little Jim,
Jamieor Petit Jacques; for scarce began
The downy beard to mark him for a man.
Blue-eyed was he and femininely fair.
A maiden might have coveted his hair

That trapped the sunlight in its tangled skein:
So, tardily, outflowered the wild blond strain
That gutted Rome grown overfat in sloth.
A Ganymedes haunted by a Goth
Was Jamie. When the restive ghost was laid,
He seemed some fancy-ridden child who played
At manliness 'mid all those bearded men.
The sternest heart was drawn to Jamie then.
But his one mood ne'er linked two hours together.
To schedule Jamie's way, as prairie weather,
Was to get fact by wedding doubt and whim;
For very lightly slept that ghost in him.
No cloudy brooding went before his wrath
That, like a thunder-squall, recked not its path,
But raged upon what happened in its way.
Some called him brave who saw him on that day
When Ashley stormed a bluff town of the Ree,
And all save beardless Jamie turned to flee
For shelter from that steep, lead-harrowed slope.
Yet, hardly courage, but blind rage agrope
Inspired the foolish deed.

'Twas then old Hugh
Tore off the gray mask, and the heart shone through.
For, halting in a dry, flood-guttered draw,
The trappers rallied, looked aloft and saw

That travesty of war against the sky.
Out of a breathless hush, the old man's cry
Leaped shivering, an anguished cry and wild
As of some mother fearing for her child,
And up the steep he went with mighty bounds.
Long afterward the story went the rounds,
How old Glass fought that day. With gun for club,
Grim as a grizzly fighting for a cub,
He laid about him, cleared the way, and so,
Supported by the firing from below,
Brought Jamie back. And when the deed was done,
Taking the lad upon his knee: "My Son,
Brave men are not ashamed to fear," said Hugh,
"And I've a mind to make a man of you;
So here's your first acquaintance with the law!"
Whereat he spanked the lad with vigorous paw
And, having done so, limped away to bed;
For, wounded in the hip, the old man bled.

It was a month before he hobbled out,
And Jamie, like a fond son, hung about
The old man's tent and waited upon him.
And often would the deep gray eyes grow dim
With gazing on the boy; and there would go —
As though Spring-fire should waken out of snow —

A wistful light across that mask of gray.
And once Hugh smiled his enigmatic way,
While poring long on Jamie's face, and said:
"So with their sons are women brought to bed,
Sore wounded!"
Thus united were the two:
And some would dub the old man 'Mother Hugh';
While those in whom all living waters sank
To some dull inner pool that teemed and stank
With formless evil, into that morass
Gazed, and saw darkly there, as in a glass,
The foul shape of some weakly envied sin.
For each man builds a world and dwells therein.
Nor could these know what mocking ghost of Spring
Stirred Hugh's gray world with dreams of blossoming
That wooed no seed to swell or bird to sing.
So might a dawn-struck digit of the moon
Dream back the rain of some old lunar June
And ache through all its craters to be green.
Little they know what life's one love can mean,
Who shrine it in a bower of peace and bliss:
Pang dwelling in a puckered cicatrice
More truly figures this belated love.
Yet very precious was the hurt thereof,
Grievous to bear, too dear to cast away.

Now Jamie went with Hugh; but who shall say
If 'twas a warm heart or a wind of whim,
Love, or the rover's teasing itch in him,
Moved Jamie? Howsoe'er, 'twas good to see
Graybeard and Goldhair riding knee to knee,
One age in young adventure. One who saw
Has likened to a February thaw
Hugh's mellow mood those days; and truly so,
For when the tempering Southwest wakes to blow
A phantom April over melting snow,
Deep in the North some new white wrath is brewed.
Out of a dim-trailed inner solitude
The old man summoned many a stirring story,
Lived grimly once, but now shot through with glory
Caught from the wondering eyes of him who heard —
Tales jaggéd with the bleak unstudied word,
Stark saga-stuff. "A fellow that I knew,"
So nameless went the hero that was Hugh —
A mere pelt merchant, as it seemed to him;
Yet trailing epic thunders through the dim,
Whist world of Jamie's awe.
And so they went,
One heart, it seemed, and that heart well content
With tale and snatch of song and careless laughter.

Never before, and surely never after,
The gray old man seemed nearer to his youth —
That myth that somehow had to be the truth,
Yet could not be convincing any more.

Now when the days of travel numbered four
And nearer drew the barrens with their need,
On Glass, the hunter, fell the task to feed
Those four score hungers when the game should fail.
For no young eye could trace so dim a trail,
Or line the rifle sights with speed so true.
Nor might the wistful Jamie go with Hugh;
"For," so Hugh chaffed, "my trick of getting game
Might teach young eyes to put old eyes to shame.
An old dog never risks his only bone."
'Wolves prey in packs, the lion hunts alone'
Is somewhat nearer what he should have meant.

And so with merry jest the old man went;
And so they parted at an unseen gate
That even then some gust of moody fate
Clanged to betwixt them; each a tale to spell —
One in the nightmare scrawl of dreams from hell,
One in the blistering trail of days a-crawl,

Venomous footed. Nor might it ere befall
These two should meet in after days and be
Graybeard and Goldhair riding knee to knee,
Recounting with a bluff, heroic scorn
The haps of either tale.
'Twas early morn
When Hugh went forth, and all day Jamie rode
With Henry's men, while more and more the goad
Of eager youth sore fretted him, and made
The dusty progress of the cavalcade
The journey of a snail flock to the moon;
Until the shadow-weaving afternoon
Turned many fingers nightward — then he fled,
Pricking his horse, nor deigned to turn his head
At any dwindling voice of reprimand;
For somewhere in the breaks along the Grand
Surely Hugh waited with a goodly kill.
Hoofbeats of ghostly steeds on every hill,
Mysterious, muffled hoofs on every bluff!
Spurred echo horses clattering up the rough
Confluent draws! These flying Jamie heard.
The lagging air droned like the drowsy word
Of one who tells weird stories late at night.
Half headlong joy and half delicious fright,
His day-dream's pace outstripped the plunging steed's.

Lean galloper in a wind of splendid deeds,
Like Hugh's, he seemed unto himself, until,
Snorting, a-haunch above a breakneck hill,
The horse stopped short — then Jamie was aware
Of lonesome flatlands fading skyward there
Beneath him, and, zigzag on either hand,
A purple haze denoted how the Grand
Forked wide 'twixt sunset and the polar star.

A-tiptoe in the stirrups, gazing far,
He saw no Hugh nor any moving thing,
Save for a welter of cawing crows, a-wing
About some banquet in the further hush.
One faint star, set above the fading blush
Of sunset, saw the coming night, and grew.
With hand for trumpet, Jamie gave halloo;
And once again. For answer, the horse neighed.
Some vague mistrust now made him half afraid —
Some formless dread that stirred beneath the will
As far as sleep from waking.
Down the hill,
Close-footed in the skitter of the shale,
The spurred horse floundered to the solid vale
And galloped to the northwest, whinnying.
The outstripped air moaned like a wounded thing;
But Jamie gave the lie unto his dread.
"The old man's camping out to-night," he said,

"Somewhere about the forks, as like as not;
And there'll be hunks of fresh meat steaming hot,
And fighting stories by a dying fire!"

The sunset reared a luminous phantom spire
That, crumbling, sifted ashes down the sky.

Now, pausing, Jamie sent a searching cry
Into the twilit river-skirting brush,
And in the vast denial of the hush
The champing of the snaffled horse seemed loud.

Then, startling as a voice beneath a shroud,
A muffled boom woke somewhere up the stream
And, like vague thunder hearkened in a dream,
Drawled back to silence. Now, with heart a-bound,
Keen for the quarter of the perished sound,
The lad spurred gaily; for he doubted not
His cry had brought Hugh's answering rifle shot.
The laggard air was like a voice that sang,
And Jamie half believed he sniffed the tang
Of woodsmoke and the smell of flesh a-roast;
When presently before him, like a ghost,
Upstanding, huge in twilight, arms flung wide,
A gray form loomed. The wise horse reared and shied,

Snorting his inborn terror of the bear!
And in the whirlwind of a moment there,
Betwixt the brute's hoarse challenge and the charge,
The lad beheld, upon the grassy marge
Of a small spring that bullberries stooped to scan,
A ragged heap that should have been a man,
A huddled, broken thing — and it was Hugh!

There was no need for any closer view.
As, on the instant of a lightning flash
Ere yet the split gloom closes with a crash,
A landscape stares with every circumstance
Of rock and shrub — just so the fatal chance
Of Hugh's one shot, made futile with surprise,
Was clear to Jamie. Then before his eyes
The light whirled in a giddy dance of red;
And, doubting not the crumpled thing was dead
That was a friend, with but a skinning knife
He would have striven for the hated life
That triumphed there: but with a shriek of fright
The mad horse bolted through the falling night,
And Jamie, fumbling at his rifle boot,
Heard the brush crash behind him where the brute
Came headlong, close upon the straining flanks.
But when at length low-lying river banks —
White rubble in the gloaming — glimmered near,

A swift thought swept the mind of Jamie clear
Of anger and of anguish for the dead.
Scarce seemed the raging beast a thing to dread,
But some foul-playing braggart to outwit.
Now hurling all his strength upon the bit,
He sank the spurs, and with a groan of pain
The plunging horse, obedient to the rein,
Swerved sharply streamward. Sliddering in the
sand,
The bear shot past. And suddenly the Grand
Loomed up beneath and rose to meet the pair
That rode a moment upon empty air,
Then smote the water in a shower of spray.
And when again the slowly ebbing day
Came back to them, a-drip from nose to flank,
The steed was scrambling up the further bank,
And Jamie saw across the narrow stream,
Like some vague shape of fury in a dream,
The checked beast ramping at the water's rim.
Doubt struggled with a victor's thrill in him,
As, hand to buckle of the rifle-sheath,
He thought of dampened powder; but beneath
The rawhide flap the gun lay snug and dry.
Then as the horse wheeled and the mark went by—
A patch of shadow dancing upon gray —
He fired. A sluggish thunder trailed away;
The spreading smoke-rack lifted slow, and there,

Floundering in a seethe of foam, the bear
Hugged yielding water for the foe that slew!

Triumphant, Jamie wondered what old Hugh
Would think of such a "trick of getting game"!
"Young eyes" indeed! — And then that memory
came,
Like a dull blade thrust back into a wound.
One moment 'twas as though the lad had swooned
Into a dream-adventure, waking there
To sicken at the ghastly land, a-stare
Like some familiar face gone strange at last.
But as the hot tears came, the moment passed.
Song snatches, broken tales — a troop forlorn,
Like merry friends of eld come back to mourn —
O'erwhelmed him there. And when the black
bulk churned
The star-flecked stream no longer, Jamie turned,
Recrossed the river and rode back to Hugh.

A burning twist of valley grasses threw
Blear light about the region of the spring.
Then Jamie, torch aloft and shuddering,
Knelt there beside his friend, and moaned: "O
Hugh,
If I had been with you — just been with you!
We might be laughing now — and you are dead."

With gentle hand he turned the hoary head
That he might see the good gray face again.
The torch burned out, the dark swooped back, and
then
His grief was frozen with an icy plunge
In horror. 'Twas as though a bloody sponge
Had wiped the pictured features from a slate!
So, pillaged by an army drunk with hate,
Home stares upon the homing refugee.
A red gout clung where either brow should be;
The haughty nose lay crushed amid the beard,
Thick with slow ooze, whence like a devil leered
The battered mouth convulsed into a grin.

Nor did the darkness cover, for therein
Some torch, unsnuffed, with blear funereal flare,
Still painted upon black that alien stare
To make the lad more terribly alone.

Then in the gloom there rose a broken moan,
Quick stifled; and it seemed that something
stirred
About the body. Doubting that he heard,
The lad felt, with a panic catch of breath,
Pale vagrants from the legendry of death
Potential in the shadows there. But when
The motion and the moaning came again,

Hope, like a shower at daybreak, cleansed the dark,
And in the lad's heart something like a lark
Sang morning. Bending low, he crooned: "Hugh, Hugh,
It's Jamie — don't you know? — I'm here with you."

As one who in a nightmare strives to tell —
Shouting across the gap of some dim hell —
What things assail him; so it seemed Hugh heard,
And flung some unintelligible word
Athwart the muffling distance of his swoon.

Now kindled by the yet unrisen moon,
The East went pale; and like a naked thing
A little wind ran vexed and shivering
Along the dusk, till Jamie shivered too
And worried lest 'twere bitter cold where Hugh
Hung clutching at the bleak, raw edge of life.
So Jamie rose, and with his hunting-knife
Split wood and built a fire. Nor did he fear
The staring face now, for he found it dear
With the warm presence of a friend returned.
The fire made cozy chatter as it burned,
And reared a tent of light in that lone place.
Then Jamie set about to bathe the face

With water from the spring, oft crooning low,
"It's Jamie here beside you — don't you know?"
Yet came no answer save the labored breath
Of one who wrestled mightily with Death
Where watched no referee to call the foul.

The moon now cleared the world's end, and the
owl
Gave voice unto the wizardry of light;
While in some dim-lit chancel of the night,
Snouts to the goddess, wolfish corybants
Intoned their wild antiphonary chants —
The oldest, saddest worship in the world.

And Jamie watched until the firelight swirled
Softly about him. Sound and glimmer merged
To make an eerie void, through which he urged
With frantic spur some whirlwind of a steed
That made the way as glass beneath his speed,
Yet scarce kept pace with something dear that fled
On, ever on — just half a dream ahead:
Until it seemed, by some vague shape dismayed,
He cried aloud for Hugh, and the steed neighed —
A neigh that was a burst of light, not sound.
And Jamie, sprawling on the dewy ground,
Knew that his horse was sniffing at his hair,
While, mumbling through the early morning air,

There came a roll of many hoofs — and then
He saw the swinging troop of Henry's men
A-canter up the valley with the sun.

Of all Hugh's comrades crowding round, not one
But would have given heavy odds on Death;
For, though the graybeard fought with sobbing breath,
No man, it seemed, might break upon the hip
So stern a wrestler with the strangling grip
That made the neck veins like a purple thong
Tangled with knots. Nor might Hugh tarry long
There where the trail forked outward far and dim;
Or so it seemed. And when they lifted him,
His moan went treble like a song of pain,
He was so tortured. Surely it were vain
To hope he might endure the toilsome ride
Across the barrens. Better let him bide
There on the grassy couch beside the spring.
And, furthermore, it seemed a foolish thing
That eighty men should wait the issue there;
For dying is a game of solitaire
And all men play the losing hand alone.

But when at noon he had not ceased to moan,
And fought still like the strong man he had been,

There grew a vague mistrust that he might win,
And all this be a tale for wondering ears.
So Major Henry called for volunteers,
Two men among the eighty who would stay
To wait on Glass and keep the wolves away
Until he did whatever he should do.
All quite agreed 'twas bitter bread for Hugh,
Yet none, save Jamie, felt in duty bound
To run the risk — until the hat went round,
And pity wakened, at the silver's clink,
In Jules Le Bon.

'He would not have them think
That mercenary motives prompted him.
But somehow just the grief of Little Jim
Was quite sufficient — not to mention Hugh.
He weighed the risk. As everybody knew,
The Rickarees were scattered to the West:
The late campaign had stirred a hornet's nest
To fill the land with stingers (which was so),
And yet —'

Three days a southwest wind may blow
False April with no drop of dew at heart.
So Jules ran on, while, ready for the start,
The pawing horses nickered and the men,
Impatient in their saddles, yawned. And then,
With brief advice, a round of bluff good-byes

And some few reassuring backward cries,
The troop rode up the valley with the day.

Intent upon his friend, with naught to say,
Sat Jamie; while Le Bon discussed at length
The reasonable limits of man's strength —
A self-conducted dialectic strife
That made absurd all argument for life
And granted but a fresh-dug hole for Hugh.
'Twas half like murder. Yet it seemed Jules knew
Unnumbered tales accordant with the case,
Each circumstantial as to time and place
And furnished with a death's head colophon.

Vivaciously despondent, Jules ran on.
'Did he not share his judgment with the rest?
You see, 'twas some contusion of the chest
That did the trick — heart, lungs and all that,
mixed
In such a way they never could be fixed.
A bear's hug — ugh!'
And often Jamie winced
At some knife-thrust of reason that convinced
Yet left him sick with unrelinquished hope.
As one who in a darkened room might grope
For some belovéd face, with shuddering
Anticipation of a clammy thing;

So in the lad's heart sorrow fumbled round
For some old joy to lean upon, and found
The stark, cold something Jamie knew was there.
Yet, womanlike, he stroked the hoary hair
Or bathed the face; while Jules found tales to tell —
Lugubriously garrulous.
Night fell.
At sundown, day-long winds are like to veer;
So, summoning a mood of relished fear,
Le Bon remembered dire alarms by night —
The swoop of savage hordes, the desperate fight
Of men outnumbered: and, like him of old,
In all that made Jules shudder as he told,
His the great part — a man by field and flood
Fate-tossed. Upon the gloom he limned in blood
Their situation's possibilities:
Two men against the fury of the Rees —
A game in which two hundred men had failed!
He pointed out how little it availed
To run the risk for one as good as dead;
Yet, Jules Le Bon meant every word he said,
And had a scalp to lose, if need should be.

That night through Jamie's dreaming swarmed the Ree.
Gray-souled, he wakened to a dawn of gray,

And felt that something strong had gone away,
Nor knew what thing. Some whisper of the will
Bade him rejoice that Hugh was living still;
But Hugh, the real, seemed somehow otherwhere.
Jules, snug and snoring in his blanket there,
Was half a life the nearer. Just so, pain
Is nearer than the peace we seek in vain,
And by its very sting compells belief.
Jules woke, and with a fine restraint of grief
Saw early dissolution. 'One more night,
And then the poor old man would lose the fight —
Ah, such a man!'
A day and night crept by,
And yet the stubborn fighter would not die,
But grappled with the angel. All the while,
With some conviction, but with more of guile,
Jules colonized the vacancy with Rees;
Till Jamie felt that looseness of the knees
That comes of oozing courage. Many men
May tower for a white-hot moment, when
The wild blood surges at a sudden shock;
But when, insistent as a ticking clock,
Blind peril haunts and whispers, fewer dare.
Dread hovered in the hushed and moony air
The long night through; nor might a fire be lit,
Lest some far-seeing foe take note of it.
And day-long Jamie scanned the blank sky rim

For hoof-flung dust clouds; till there woke in him
A childish anger — dumb for ruth and shame —
That Hugh so dallied.
But the fourth dawn came
And with it lulled the fight, as on a field
Where broken armies sleep but will not yield.
Or had one conquered? Was it Hugh or Death?
The old man breathed with faintly fluttering
breath,
Nor did his body shudder as before.
Jules triumphed sadly. 'It would soon be o'er;
So men grew quiet when they lost their grip
And did not care. At sundown he would slip
Into the deeper silence.'
Jamie wept,
Unwitting how a furtive gladness crept
Into his heart that gained a stronger beat.
So cities, long beleaguered, take defeat —
Unto themselves half traitors.
Jules began
To dig a hole that might conceal a man;
And, as his sheath knife broke the stubborn sod,
He spoke in kindly vein of Life and God
And Mutability and Rectitude.
The immemorial funerary mood
Brought tears, mute tribute to the mother-dust;
And Jamie, seeing, felt each cutting thrust
Less like a stab into the flesh of Hugh.

The sun crept up and down the arc of blue
And through the air a chill of evening ran;
But, though the grave yawned, waiting for the man,
The man seemed scarce yet ready for the grave.

Now prompted by a coward or a knave
That lurked in him, Le Bon began to hear
Faint sounds that to the lad's less cunning ear
Were silence; more like tremors of the ground
They were, Jules said, than any proper sound —
Thus one detected horsemen miles away.
For many moments big with fate, he lay,
Ear pressed to earth; then rose and shook his head
As one perplexed. "There's something wrong," he said.
And — as at daybreak whiten winter skies,
Agape and staring with a wild surmise —
The lad's face whitened at the other's word.
Jules could not quite interpret what he heard;
A hundred horse might noise their whereabouts
In just that fashion; yet he had his doubts.
It could be bison moving, quite as well.
But if 'twere Rees — there'd be a tale to tell
That two men he might name should never hear.
He reckoned scalps that Fall were selling dear,

In keeping with the limited supply.
Men, fit to live, were not afraid to die!

Then, in that caution suits not courage ill,
Jules saddled up and cantered to the hill,
A white dam set against the twilight stream;
And as a horseman riding in a dream
The lad beheld him; watched him clamber up
To where the dusk, as from a brimming cup,
Ran over; saw him pause against the gloom,
Portentous, huge — a brooder upon doom.
What did he look upon?
Some moments passed;
Then suddenly it seemed as though a blast
Of wind, keen-cutting with the whips of sleet,
Smote horse and rider. Haunched on huddled feet,
The steed shrank from the ridge, then, rearing, wheeled
And took the rubbly incline fury-heeled.

Those days and nights, like seasons creeping slow,
Had told on Jamie. Better blow on blow
Of evil hap, with doom seen clear ahead,
Than that monotonous, abrasive dread,
Blind gnawer at the soul-thews of the blind.
Thin-worn, the last heart-string that held him kind;

Strung taut, the final tie that kept him true
Now snapped in Jamie, as he saw the two
So goaded by some terrifying sight.
Death riding with the vanguard of the Night,
Life dwindling yonder with the rear of Day!
What choice for one whom panic swept away
From moorings in the sanity of will?

Jules came and summed the vision of the hill
In one hoarse cry that left no word to say:
"Rees! Saddle up! We've got to get away!"

Small wit had Jamie left to ferret guile,
But fumblingly obeyed Le Bon; the while
Jules knelt beside the man who could not flee:
For big hearts lack not time for charity
However thick the blows of fate may fall.
Yet, in that Jules Le Bon was practical,
He could not quite ignore a hunting knife,
A flint, a gun, a blanket — gear of life
Scarce suited to the customs of the dead!

And Hugh slept soundly in his ample bed,
Star-canopied and blanketed with night,
Unwitting how Venality and Fright
Made hot the westward trail of Henry's men.

II

THE AWAKENING

No one may say what time elapsed, or when
The slumberous shadow lifted over Hugh:
But some globose immensity of blue
Enfolded him at last, within whose light
He seemed to float, as some faint swimmer might,
A deep beneath and overhead a deep.
So one late plunged into the lethal sleep,
A spirit diver fighting for his breath,
Swoops through the many-fathomed glooms of death,
Emerging in a daylight strange and new.

Rousing a languid wonder, came on Hugh
The quiet, steep-arched splendor of the day.
Agrope for some dim memory, he lay
Upon his back, and watched a lucent fleece
Fade in the blue profundity of peace
As did the memory he sought in vain.
Then with a stirring of mysterious pain,

Old habit of the body bade him rise;
But when he would obey, the hollow skies
Broke as a bubble punctured, and went out.

Again he woke, and with a drowsy doubt,
Remote unto his horizontal gaze
He saw the world's end kindle to a blaze
And up the smoky steep pale heralds run.
And when at length he knew it for the sun,
Dawn found the darkling reaches of his mind,
Where in the twilight he began to find
Strewn shards and torsos of familiar things.
As from the rubble in a place of kings
Men school the dream to build the past anew,
So out of dream and fragment builded Hugh,
And came upon the reason of his plight:
The bear's attack — the shot — and then the night
Wherein men talked as ghosts above a grave.

Some consciousness of will the memory gave:
He would get up. The painful effort spent
Made the wide heavens billow as a tent
Wind-struck, the shaken prairie sag and roll.
Some moments with an effort at control
He swayed, half raised upon his arms, until
The dizzy cosmos righted, and was still.

Then would he stand erect and be again
The man he was: an overwhelming pain
Smote him to earth, and one unruly limb
Refused the weight and crumpled under him.

Sickened with torture he lay huddled there,
Gazing about him with a great despair
Proportioned to the might that felt the chain.
Far-flung as dawn, collusive sky and plain
Stared bleak denial back.
Why strive at all? —
That vacancy about him like a wall,
Yielding as light, a granite scarp to climb!
Some little waiting on the creep of time,
Abandonment to circumstance; and then —

Here flashed a sudden thought of Henry's men
Into his mind and drove the gloom away.
They would be riding westward with the day!
How strange he had forgot! That battered leg
Or some scalp wound, had set his wits a-beg!
Was this Hugh Glass to whimper like a squaw?
Grimly amused, he raised his head and saw —
The empty distance: listened long and heard —
Naught but the twitter of a lonely bird
That emphasized the hush.
Was something wrong?

'Twas not the Major's way to dally long,
And surely they had camped not far behind.
Now woke a query in his troubled mind —
Where was his horse? Again came creeping back
The circumstances of the bear's attack.
He had dismounted, thinking at the spring
To spend the night — and then the grisly thing —
Of course the horse had bolted; plain enough!
But why was all the soil about so rough
As though a herd of horses had been there?
The riddle vexed him till his vacant stare
Fell on a heap of earth beside a pit.
What did that mean? He wormed his way to it,
The newly wakened wonder dulling pain.
No paw of beast had scooped it — that was plain.
'Twas squared; indeed, 'twas like a grave, he thought.
A grave — a grave — the mental echo wrought
Sick fancies! Who had risen from the dead?
Who, lying there, had heard above his head
The ghostly talkers deaf unto his shout?

Now searching all the region round about,
As though the answer were a lurking thing,
He saw along the margin of the spring
An ash-heap and the litter of a camp.
Suspicion, like a little smoky lamp

That daubs the murk but cannot fathom it,
Flung blear grotesques before his groping wit.
Had Rees been there? And he alive? Who
then?
And were he dead, it might be Henry's men!
How many suns had risen while he slept?
The smoky glow flared wildly, and he crept,
The dragged limb throbbing, till at length he
found
The trail of many horses westward bound:
And in one breath the groping light became
A gloom-devouring ecstasy of flame,
A dazing conflagration of belief!

Plunged deeper than the seats of hate and grief,
He gazed about for aught that might deny
Such baseness: saw the non-committal sky,
The prairie apathetic in a shroud,
The bland complacence of a vagrant cloud —
World-wide connivance! Smilingly the sun
Approved a land wherein such deeds were done;
And careless breezes, like a troop of youth,
Unawed before the presence of such truth,
Went scampering amid the tousled brush.
Then bye and bye came on him with a rush
His weakness and the consciousness of pain,
While, with the chill insistence of a rain

That pelts the sodden wreck of Summer's end,
His manifest betrayal by a friend
Beat in upon him. Jamie had been there;
And Jamie — Jamie — Jamie did not care!

What no man yet had witnessed, the wide sky
Looked down and saw; a light wind idling by
Heard what no ear of mortal yet had heard:
For he — whose name was like a magic word
To conjure the remote heroic mood
Of valiant deed and splendid fortitude,
Wherever two that shared a fire might be, —
Gave way to grief and wept unmanfully.
Yet not as they for whom tears fall like dew
To green a frosted heart again, wept Hugh.
So thewed to strive, so engined to prevail
And make harsh fate the zany of a tale,
His own might shook and tore him.
For a span
He lay, a gray old ruin of a man
With all his years upon him like a snow.
And then at length, as from the long ago,
Remote beyond the other side of wrong,
The old love came like some remembered song
Whereof the strain is sweet, the burden sad.
A retrospective vision of the lad
Grew up in him, as in a foggy night

The witchery of semilunar light
Mysteriously quickens all the air.
Some memory of wind-blown golden hair,
The boyish laugh, the merry eyes of blue,
Wrought marvelously in the heart of Hugh,
As under snow the dæmon of the Spring.
And momently it seemed a little thing
To suffer; nor might treachery recall
The miracle of being loved at all,
The privilege of loving to the end.
And thereupon a longing for his friend
Made life once more a struggle for a prize —
To look again upon the merry eyes,
To see again the wind-blown golden hair.
Aye, one should lavish very tender care
Upon the vessel of a hope so great,
Lest it be shattered, and the precious freight,
As water on the arid waste, poured out.
Yet, though he longed to live, a subtle doubt
Still turned on him the weapon of his pain:
Now, as before, collusive sky and plain
Outstared his purpose for a puny thing.

Praying to live, he crawled back to the spring,
With something in his heart like gratitude
That by good luck his gun might furnish food,
His blanket, shelter, and his flint, a fire.

For, after all, what thing do men desire
To be or have, but these condition it?
These with a purpose and a little wit,
And howsoever smitten, one might rise,
Push back the curtain of the curving skies,
And come upon the living dream at last.

Exhausted, by the spring he lay and cast
Dull eyes about him. What did it portend?
Naught but the footprints of a fickle friend,
A yawning grave and ashes met his eyes!
Scarce feeling yet the shock of a surprise,
He searched about him for his flint and knife;
Knew vaguely that his seeking was for life,
And that the place was empty where he sought.
No food, no fire, no shelter! Dully wrought
The bleak negation in him, slowly crept
To where, despite the pain, his love had kept
A shrine for Jamie undefiled of doubt.
Then suddenly conviction, like a shout,
Aroused him. Jamie — Jamie was a thief!
The very difficulty of belief
Was fuel for the simmering of rage,
That grew and grew, the more he strove to gage
The underlying motive of the deed.
Untempered youth might fail a friend in need;
But here had wrought some devil of the will,

Some heartless thing, too cowardly to kill,
That left to Nature what it dared not do!

So bellowsed, all the kindled soul of Hugh
Became a still white hell of brooding ire,
And through his veins regenerating fire
Ran, driving out the lethargy of pain.
Now once again he scanned the yellow plain,
Conspirant with the overbending skies;
And lo, the one was blue as Jamie's eyes,
The other of the color of his hair —
Twin hues of falseness merging to a stare,
As though such guilt, thus visibly immense,
Regarded its effect with insolence!

Alas for those who fondly place above
The act of loving, what they chance to love;
Who prize the goal more dearly than the way!
For time shall plunder them, and change betray,
And life shall find them vulnerable still.

A bitter-sweet narcotic to the will,
Hugh's love increased the peril of his plight;
But anger broke the slumber of his might,
Quickened the heart and warmed the blood that ran
Defiance for the treachery of Man,

Defiance for the meaning of his pain,
Defiance for the distance of the plain
That seemed to gloat, 'You can not master me.'
And for one burning moment he felt free
To rise and conquer in a wind of rage.
But as a tiger, conscious of the cage,
A-smoulder with a purpose, broods and waits,
So with the sullen patience that is hate's
Hugh taught his wrath to bide expedience.

Now cognizant of every quickened sense,
Thirst came upon him. Leaning to the spring,
He stared with fascination on a thing
That rose from giddy deeps to share the draught—
A face, it was, so tortured that it laughed,
A ghastly mask that Murder well might wear;
And while as one they drank together there,
It was as though the deed he meant to do
Took shape and came to kiss the lips of Hugh,
Lest that revenge might falter. Hunger woke;
And from the bush with leafage gray as smoke,
Wherein like flame the bullberries glinted red
(Scarce sweeter than the heart of him they fed),
Hugh feasted.

And the hours of waiting crept,
A-gloom, a-glow; and though he waked or slept,
The pondered purpose or a dream that wrought,

By night, the murder of his waking thought,
Sustained him till he felt his strength returned.
And then at length the longed-for morning burned
And beckoned down the vast way he should crawl—
That waste to be surmounted as a wall,
Sky-rims and yet more sky-rims steep to climb —
That simulacrum of enduring Time —
The hundred empty miles 'twixt him and where
The stark Missouri ran!
Yet why not dare?
Despite the useless leg, he could not die
One hairsbreadth farther from the earth and sky,
Or more remote from kindness.

III

THE CRAWL

Straight away
Beneath the flare of dawn, the Ree land lay,
And through it ran the short trail to the goal.
Thereon a grim turnpikeman waited toll:
But 'twas so doomed that southering geese should flee
Nine times, ere yet the vengeance of the Ree
Should make their foe the haunter of a tale.

Midway to safety on the northern trail
The scoriac region of a hell burned black
Forbade the crawler. And for all his lack,
Hugh had no heart to journey with the suns:
No suppliant unto those faithless ones
Should bid for pity at the Big Horn's mouth.

The greater odds for safety in the South
Allured him; so he felt the midday sun
Blaze down the coulee of a little run

That dwindled upward to the watershed
Whereon the feeders of the Moreau head —
Scarce more than deep-carved runes of vernal rain.
The trailing leg was like a galling chain,
And bound him to a doubt that would not pass.
Defiant clumps of thirst-embittered grass
That bit parched earth with bared and fang-like roots;
Dwarf thickets, jealous for their stunted fruits,
Harsh-tempered by their disinheritance —
These symbolized the enmity of Chance
For him who, with his fate unreconciled,
Equipped for travel as a weanling child,
Essayed the journey of a mighty man.

Like agitated oil the heat-waves ran
And made the scabrous gulch appear to shake
As some reflected landscape in a lake
Where laggard breezes move. A taunting reek
Rose from the grudging seepage of the creek,
Whereof Hugh drank and drank, and still would drink.
And where the mottled shadow dripped as ink
From scanty thickets on the yellow glare,
The crawler faltered with no heart to dare
Again the torture of that toil, until

The master-thought of vengeance 'woke the will
To goad him forth. And when the sun quiesced
Amid ironic heavens in the West —
The region of false friends — Hugh gained a rise
Whence to the fading cincture of the skies
A purpling panorama swept away.
Scarce farther than a shout might carry, lay
The place of his betrayal. He could see
The yellow blotch of earth where treachery
Had digged his grave. O futile wrath and toil!
Tucked in beneath yon coverlet of soil,
Turned back for him, how soundly had he slept!
Fool, fool! to struggle when he might have crept
So short a space, yet farther than the flight
Of swiftest dreaming through the longest night,
Into the quiet house of no false friend.

Alas for those who seek a journey's end —
They have it ever with them like a ghost:
Nor shall they find, who deem they seek it most,
But crave the end of human ends — as Hugh.

Now swoopingly the world of dream broke through
The figured wall of sense. It seemed he ran
As wind above the creeping ways of man,
And came upon the place of his desire,
Where burned, far-luring as a beacon-fire,

The face of Jamie. But the vengeful stroke
Bit air. The darkness lifted like a smoke —
And it was early morning.
Gazing far,
From where the West yet kept a pallid star
To thinner sky where dawn was wearing through,
Hugh shrank with dread, reluctant to renew
The war with that serene antagonist.
More fearsome than a smashing iron fist
Seemed that vast negativity of might;
Until the frustrate vision of the night
Came moonwise on the gloom of his despair.
And lo, the foe was naught but yielding air,
A vacancy to fill with his intent!
So from his spacious bed he 'rose and went
Three-footed; and the vision goaded him.

All morning southward to the bare sky rim
The rugged coulee zigzagged, mounting slow;
And ever as it 'rose, the lean creek's flow
Dwindled and dwindled steadily, until
At last a scooped-out basin would not fill;
And thenceforth 'twas a way of mocking dust.
But, in that Hugh still kept the driving lust
For vengeance, this new circumstance of fate
Served but to brew more venom for his hate,
And nerved him to avail the most with least.

Ere noon the crawler chanced upon a feast
Of bread-root sunning in a favored draw.
A sentry gopher from his stronghold saw
Some three-legged beast, bear-like, yet not a bear,
With quite misguided fury digging where
No hapless brother gopher might be found.
And while, with stripéd nose above his mound,
The sentinel chirped shrilly to his clan
Scare-tales of that anomaly, the man
Devoured the chance-flung manna of the plains
That some vague reminiscence of old rains
Kept succulent, despite the burning drouth.

So with new vigor Hugh assailed the South,
His pockets laden with the precious roots
Against that coming traverse, where no fruits
Of herb or vine or shrub might brave the land
Spread rooflike 'twixt the Moreau and the Grand.

The coulee deepened; yellow walls flung high,
Sheer to the ragged strip of blinding sky,
Dazzled and sweltered in the glare of day.
Capricious draughts that woke and died away
Into the heavy drowse, were breatht as flame.
And midway down the afternoon, Hugh came
Upon a little patch of spongy ground:
His thirst became a rage. He gazed around,

Seeking a spring; but all about was dry
As strewn bones bleaching to a desert sky;
Nor did a clawed hole, bought with needed
strength,
Return a grateful ooze. And when at length
Hugh sucked the mud, he spat it in disgust.
It had the acrid tang of broken trust,
The sweetish, tepid taste of feigning love!

Still hopeful of a spring somewhere above,
He crawled the faster for his taunted thirst.
More damp spots, no less grudging than the first,
Occurred with growing frequence on the way,
Until amid the purple wane of day
The crawler came upon a little pool!
Clear as a friend's heart, 'twas, and seeming cool —
A crystal bowl whence skyey deeps looked up.
So might a god set down his drinking cup
Charged with a distillation of haut skies.
As famished horses, thrusting to the eyes
Parched muzzles, take a long-sought water-hole,
Hugh plunged his head into the brimming bowl
As though to share the joy with every sense.
And lo, the tang of that wide insolence
Of sky and plain was acrid in the draught!
How ripplingly the lying water laughed!
How like fine sentiment the mirrored sky

Won credence for a sink of alkali!
So with false friends. And yet, as may accrue
From specious love some profit of the true,
One gift of kindness had the tainted sink.
Stripped of his clothes, Hugh let his body drink
At every thirsting pore. Through trunk and limb
The elemental blessing solaced him;
Nor did he rise till, vague with stellar light,
The lone gulch, buttressing an arch of night,
Was like a temple to the Holy Ghost.
As priests in slow procession with the Host,
A gusty breeze intoned — now low, now loud,
And now, as to the murmur of a crowd,
Yielding the dim-torched wonder of the nave.
Aloft along the dusky architrave
The wander-tale of drifting stars evolved;
And Hugh lay gazing till the whole resolved
Into a haze.

It seemed that Little Jim
Had come to share a merry fire with him,
And there had been no trouble 'twixt the two.
And Jamie listened eagerly while Hugh
Essayed a tangled tale of bears and men,
Bread-root and stars. But ever now and then
The shifting smoke-cloud dimmed the golden hair,
The leal blue eyes; until with sudden flare

The flame effaced them utterly — and lo,
The gulch bank-full with morning!
Loath to go,
Hugh lay beside the pool and pondered fate.
He saw his age-long pilgrimage of hate
Stretch out — a fool's trail; and it made him cringe;
For still amid the nightly vision's fringe
His dull wit strayed, companioned with regret.
But when the sun, a tilted cauldron set
Upon the gulch rim, poured a blaze of day,
He rose and bathed again, and went his way,
Sustaining wrath returning with the toil.

At noon the gulch walls, hewn in lighter soil,
Fell back; and coulees dense with shrub and vine
Climbed zigzag to the sharp horizon line,
Whence one might choose the pilotage of crows.
He labored upward through the noonday doze.
Of breathless shade, where plums were turning red
In tangled bowers, and grapevines overhead
Purpled with fruit to taunt the crawler's thirst.
With little effort Hugh attained the first;
The latter bargained sharply ere they sold
Their luscious clusters for the hoarded gold
Of strength that had so very much to buy.

Now, having feasted, it was sweet to lie
Beneath a sun-proof canopy; and sleep
Came swiftly.
Hugh awakened to some deep
Star-snuffing well of night. Awhile he lay
And wondered what had happened to the day
And where he was and what were best to do.
But when, fog-like, the drowse dispersed, he knew
How from the rim above the plain stretched far
To where the evening and the morning are,
And that 'twere better he should crawl by night,
Sleep out the glare. With groping hands for sight,
Skyward along the broken steep he crawled,
And saw at length, immense and purple-walled —
Or sensed — the dusky mystery of plain.
Gazing aloft, he found the capsized Wain
In mid-plunge down the polar steep. Thereto
He set his back; and far ahead there grew,
As some pale blossom from a darkling root,
The star-blanched summit of a lonely butte,
And thitherward he dragged his heavy limb.

It seemed naught moved. Time hovered over him,
An instant of incipient endeavor.
'Twas ever thus, and should be thus forever —

This groping for the same armful of space,
An insubstantial essence of one place,
Extentless on a weird frontier of sleep.
Sheer deep upon unfathomable deep
The flood of dusk bore down without a sound,
As ocean on the spirits of the drowned
Awakened headlong leagues beneath the light.

So lapsed the drowsy æon of the night —
A strangely tensile moment in a trance.
And then, as quickened to somnambulance,
The heavens, imperceptibly in motion,
Were altered as the upward deeps of ocean
Diluted with a seepage of the moon.
The butte-top, late a gossamer balloon
In mid-air tethered hovering, grew down
And rooted in a blear expanse of brown,
That, lifting slowly with the ebb of night,
Took on the harsh solidity of light —
And day was on the prairie like a flame.

Scarce had he munched the hoarded roots, when came
A vertigo of slumber. Snatchy dreams
Of sick pools, inaccessible cool streams,
Lured on through giddy vacancies of heat
In swooping flights; now hills of roasting meat

Made savory the oven of the world,
Yet kept remote peripheries and whirled
About a burning center that was Hugh.
Then all were gone, save one, and it turned blue
And was a heap of cool and luscious fruit,
Until at length he knew it for the butte
Now mantled with a weaving of the gloam.
It was the hour when cattle straggle home.
Across the clearing in a hush of sleep
They saunter, lowing; loiter belly-deep
Amid the lush grass by the meadow stream.
How like the sound of water in a dream
The intermittent tinkle of yon bell.
A windlass creaks contentment from a well,
And cool deeps gurgle as the bucket sinks.
Now blowing at the trough the plow-team drinks;
The shaken harness rattles. Sleepy quails
Call far. The warm milk hisses in the pails
There in the dusky barn-lot. Crickets cry.
The meadow twinkles with the glowing fly.
One hears the horses munching at their oats.
The green grows black. A veil of slumber floats
Across the haunts of home-enamored men.

Some freak of memory brought back again
The boyhood world of sight and scent and sound:
It perished, and the prairie ringed him round,

Blank as the face of fate. In listless mood
Hugh set his face against the solitude
And met the night. The new moon, low and far,
A frail cup tilted, nor the high-swung star,
It seemed, might glint on any stream or spring
Or touch with silver any toothsome thing.
The kiote voiced the universal lack.
As from a nether fire, the plain gave back
The swelter of the noon-glare to the gloom.
In the hot hush Hugh heard his temples boom.
Thirst tortured. Motion was a languid pain.
Why seek some further nowhere on the plain?
Here might the kiotes feast as well as there.
So spoke some loose-lipped spirit of despair;
And still Hugh moved, volitionless — a weight
Submissive to that now unconscious hate,
As darkling water to the hidden moon.

Now when the night wore on in middle swoon,
The crawler, roused from stupor, was aware
Of some strange alteration in the air.
To breathe became an act of conscious will.
The starry waste was ominously still.
The far-off kiote's yelp came sharp and clear
As through a tunnel in the atmosphere —
A ponderable, resonating mass.

The limp leg dragging on the sun-dried grass
Produced a sound unnaturally loud.

Crouched, panting, Hugh looked up but saw no cloud.
An oily film seemed spread upon the sky
Now dully staring as the open eye
Of one in fever. Gasping, choked with thirst,
A childish rage assailed Hugh, and he cursed:
'Twas like a broken spirit's outcry, tossed
Upon hell's burlesque sabbath for the lost,
And briefly space seemed crowded with the voice.

To wait and die, to move and die — what choice?
Hugh chose not, yet he crawled; though more and more
He felt the futile strife was nearly o'er.
And as he went, a muffled rumbling grew,
More felt than heard; for long it puzzled Hugh.
Somehow 'twas coextensive with his thirst,
Yet boundless; swollen blood-veins ere they burst
Might give such warning, so he thought. And still
The drone seemed heaping up a phonic hill
That towered in a listening profound.
Then suddenly a mountain peak of sound

Came toppling to a heaven-jolting fall!
The prairie shuddered, and a raucous drawl
Ran far and perished in the outer deep.

As one too roughly shaken out of sleep,
Hugh stared bewildered. Still the face of night
Remained the same, save where upon his right
The moon had vanished 'neath the prairie rim.
Then suddenly the meaning came to him.
He turned and saw athwart the northwest sky,
Like some black eyelid shutting on an eye,
A coming night to which the night was day!
Star-hungry, ranged in regular array,
The lifting mass assailed the Dragon's lair,
Submerged the region of the hounded Bear,
Out-topped the tall Ox-Driver and the Pole.
And all the while there came a low-toned roll,
Less sound in air than tremor in the earth,
From where, like flame upon a windy hearth,
Deep in the further murk sheet-lightning flared.
And still the southern arc of heaven stared,
A half-shut eye, near blind with fever rheum;
And still the plain lay tranquil as a tomb
Wherein the dead reck not a menaced world.

What turmoil now? Lo, ragged columns hurled
Pell-mell up stellar slopes! Swift blue fires leap

Above the wild assailants of the steep!
Along the solid rear a dull boom runs!
So light horse squadrons charge beneath the guns.
Now once again the night is deathly still.
What ghastly peace upon the zenith hill,
No longer starry? Not a sound is heard.
So poised the hush, it seems a whispered word
Might loose all noises in an avalanche.
Only the black mass moves, and far glooms blanch
With fitful flashes. The capricious flare
Reveals the butte-top tall and lonely there
Like some gray prophet contemplating doom.

But hark! What spirits whisper in the gloom?
What sibilation of conspiracies
Ruffles the hush — or murmuring of trees,
Ghosts of the ancient forest — or old rain,
In some hallucination of the plain,
A frustrate phantom mourning? All around,
That e'er evolving, ne'er resolving sound
Gropes in the stifling hollow of the night.

Then — once — twice — thrice — a blade of
blinding light
Ripped up the heavens, and the deluge came —
A burst of wind and water, noise and flame
That hurled the watcher flat upon the ground.

A moment past Hugh famished; now, half drowned,
He gasped for breath amid the hurtling drench.

So might a testy god, long sought to quench
A puny thirst, pour wassail, hurling after
The crashing bowl with wild sardonic laughter
To see man wrestle with his answered prayer!

Prone to the roaring flaw and ceaseless flare,
The man drank deeply with the drinking grass;
Until it seemed the storm would never pass
But ravin down the painted murk for aye.
When had what dreamer seen a glaring day
And leagues of prairie pantingly aquiver?
Flame, flood, wind, noise and darkness were a river
Tearing a cosmic channel to no sea.

The tortured night wore on; then suddenly
Peace fell. Remotely the retreating Wrath
Trailed dull, reluctant thunders in its path,
And up along a broken stair of cloud
The Dawn came creeping whitely. Like a shroud
Gray vapors clung along the sodden plain.
Up rose the sun to wipe the final stain

Of fury from the sky and drink the mist./
Against a flawless arch of amethyst
The butte soared, like a soul serene and white
Because of the katharsis of the night.

All day Hugh fought with sleep and struggled on
Southeastward; for the heavy heat was gone
Despite the naked sun. The blank Northwest
Breathed coolly; and the crawler thought it best
To move while yet each little break and hollow
And shallow basin of the bison-wallow
Begrudged the earth and air its dwindling store.
But now that thirst was conquered, more and more
He felt the gnaw of hunger like a rage.
And once, from dozing in a clump of sage,
A lone jackrabbit bounded. As a flame
Hope flared in Hugh, until the memory came
Of him who robbed a sleeping friend and fled.
Then hate and hunger merged; the man saw red,
And momently the hare and Little Jim
Were one blurred mark for murder unto him —
Elusive, taunting, sweet to clutch and tear.
The rabbit paused to scan the crippled bear
That ground its teeth as though it chewed a root.
But when, in witless rage, Hugh drew his boot

And hurled it with a curse, the hare loped off,
Its critic ears turned back, as though to scoff
At silly brutes that threw their legs away.

Night like a shadow on enduring day
Swooped by. The dream of crawling and the act
Were phases of one everlasting fact:
Hugh woke, and he was doing what he dreamed.
The butte, outstripped at eventide, now seemed
Intent to follow. Ever now and then
The crawler paused to calculate again
What dear-bought yawn of distance dwarfed the hill.
Close in the rear it soared, a Titan still,
Whose hand-in-pocket saunter kept the pace.

Distinct along the southern rim of space
A low ridge lay, the crest of the divide.
What rest and plenty on the other side!
Through what lush valleys ran what crystal brooks!
And there in virgin meadows wayside nooks
With leaf and purple cluster dulled the light!

All day it seemed that distant Pisgah Height
Retreated, and the tall butte dogged the rear.

At eve a stripéd gopher chirping near
Gave Hugh an inspiration. Now, at least,
No thieving friend should rob him of a feast.
His great idea stirred him as a shout.
Off came a boot, a sock was ravelled out.
The coarse yarn, fashioned to a running snare,
He placed about the gopher's hole with care,
And then withdrew to hold the yarn and wait.
The nightbound moments, ponderous with fate,
Crept slowly by. The battered gray face leered
In expectation. Down the grizzled beard
Ran slaver from anticipating jaws.
Evolving twilight hovered to a pause.
The light wind fell. Again and yet again
The man devoured his fancied prey: and then
Within the noose a timid snout was thrust.
His hand unsteadied with the hunger lust,
Hugh jerked the yarn. It broke.

Down swooped the night,
A shadow of despair. Bleak height on height,
It seemed, a sheer abyss enclosed him round.
Clutching a strand of yarn, he heard the sound
Of some infernal turmoil under him.
Grimly he strove to reach the ragged rim
That snared a star, until the skyey space
Was darkened with a roof of Jamie's face,

And then the yarn was broken, and he fell.
A-tumble like a stricken bat, his yell
Woke hordes of laughers down the giddy yawn
Of that black pit — and suddenly 'twas dawn.

Dream-dawn, dream-noon, dream-twilight! Yet, possest
By one stern dream more clamorous than the rest,
Hugh headed for a gap that notched the hills,
Wherethrough a luring murmur of cool rills,
A haunting smell of verdure seemed to creep.
By fits the wild adventure of his sleep
Became the cause of all his waking care,
And he complained unto the empty air
How Jamie broke the yarn.

The sun and breeze
Had drunk all shallow basins to the lees,
But now and then some gully, choked with mud,
Retained a turbid relict of the flood.
Dream-dawn, dream-noon, dream-night! And still obsessed
By that one dream more clamorous than the rest,
Hugh struggled for the crest of the divide.
And when at length he saw the other side,
'Twas but a rumpled waste of yellow hills!

The deep-sunk, wiser self had known the rills
And nooks to be the facture of a whim;
Yet had the pleasant lie befriended him,
And now the brutal fact had come to stare.

Succumbing to a langorous despair,
He mourned his fate with childish uncontrol
And nursed that deadly adder of the soul,
Self-pity. Let the crows swoop down and feed,
Aye, batten on a thing that died of need,
A poor old wretch betrayed of God and Man!
So peevishly his broken musing ran,
Till, glutted with the luxury of woe,
He turned to see the butte, that he might know
How little all his striving could avail
Against ill-luck. And lo, a finger-nail,
At arm-length held, could blot it out of space!
A goading purpose and a creeping pace
Had dwarfed the Titan in a haze of blue!
And suddenly new power came to Hugh
With gazing on his masterpiece of will.
So fare the wise on Pisgah.

Down the hill,
Unto the higher vision consecrate,
Now sallied forth the new triumvirate —
A Weariness, a Hunger and a Glory —

Against tyrannic Chance. As in a story
Some higher Hugh observed the baser part.
So sits the artist throned above his art,
Nor recks the travail so the end be fair.
It seemed the wrinkled hills pressed in to stare,
The arch of heaven was an eye a-gaze.
And as Hugh went, he fashioned many a phrase
For use when, by some friendly ember-light,
His tale of things endured should speed the night
And all this gloom grow golden in the sharing.
So wrought the old evangel of high daring,
The duty and the beauty of endeavor,
The privilege of going on forever,
A victor in the moment.

Ah, but when
The night slipped by and morning came again,
The sky and hill were only sky and hill
And crawling but an agony of will.
So once again the old triumvirate,
A buzzard Hunger and a viper Hate
Together with the baser part of Hugh,
Went visionless.

That day the wild geese flew,
Vague in a gray profundity of sky;
And on into the night their muffled cry
Haunted the moonlight like a far farewell.
It made Hugh homesick, though he could not tell

For what he yearned; and in his fitful sleeping
The cry became the sound of Jamie weeping,
Immeasurably distant.
Morning broke,
Blear, chilly, through a fog that drove as smoke
Before the booming Northwest. Sweet and sad
Came creeping back old visions of the lad —
Some trick of speech, some merry little lilt,
The brooding blue of eyes too clear for guilt,
The wind-blown golden hair. Hate slept that day,
And half of Hugh was half a life away,
A wandering spirit wistful of the past;
And half went drifting with the autumn blast
That mourned among the melancholy hills;
For something of the lethargy that kills
Came creeping close upon the ebb of hate.
Only the raw wind, like the lash of Fate,
Could have availed to move him any more.
At last the buzzard beak no longer tore
His vitals, and he ceased to think of food.
The fighter slumbered, and a maudlin mood
Foretold the dissolution of the man.
He sobbed, and down his beard the big tears ran.
And now the scene is changed; the bleak wind's cry
Becomes a flight of bullets snarling by

From where on yonder summit skulk the Rees.
Against the sky, in silhouette, he sees
The headstrong Jamie in the leaden rain.
And now serenely beautiful and slain
The dear lad lies within a gusty tent.

Thus vexed with doleful whims the crawler went
Adrift before the wind, nor saw the trail;
Till close on night he knew a rugged vale
Had closed about him; and a hush was there,
Though still a moaning in the upper air
Told how the gray-winged gale blew out the day.
Beneath a clump of brush he swooned away
Into an icy void; and waking numb,
It seemed the still white dawn of death had come
On this, some cradle-valley of the soul.
He saw a dim, enchanted hollow roll
Beneath him, and the brush thereof was fleece;
And, like the body of the perfect peace
That thralled the whole, abode the break of day.
It seemed no wind had ever come that way,
Nor sound dwelt there, nor echo found the place.
And Hugh lay lapped in wonderment a space,
Vexed with a snarl whereof the ends were lost,
Till, shivering, he wondered if a frost
Had fallen with the dying of the blast.
So, vaguely troubled, listlessly he cast

A gaze about him: lo, above his head
The gray-green curtain of his chilly bed
Was broidered thick with plums! Or so it seemed,
For he was half persuaded that he dreamed;
And with a steady stare he strove to keep
That treasure for the other side of sleep.

Returning hunger bade him rise; in vain
He struggled with a fine-spun mesh of pain
That trammelled him, until a yellow stream
Of day flowed down the white vale of a dream
And left it disenchanted in the glare.
Then, warmed and soothed, Hugh rose and feasted there,
And thought once more of reaching the Moreau.

To southward with a painful pace and slow
He went stiff-jointed; and a gnawing ache
In that hip-wound he had for Jamie's sake
Oft made him groan — nor wrought a tender mood:
The rankling weapon of ingratitude
Was turned again with every puckering twinge.

Far down the vale a narrow winding fringe
Of wilted green betokened how a spring
There sent a little rill meandering;

And Hugh was greatly heartened, for he knew
What fruits and herbs might flourish in the slough,
And thirst, henceforth, should torture not again.

So day on day, despite the crawler's pain,
All in the windless, golden autumn weather,
These two, as comrades, struggled south together —
The homeless graybeard and the homing rill:
And one was sullen with the lust to kill,
And one went crooning of the moon-wooed vast;
For each the many-fathomed peace at last,
But oh the boon of singing on the way!
So came these in the golden fall of day
Unto a sudden turn in the ravine,
Wherefrom Hugh saw a flat of cluttered green
Beneath the further bluffs of the Moreau.

With sinking heart he paused and gazed below
Upon the goal of so much toil and pain.
Yon green had seemed a paradise to gain
The while he thirsted where the lonely butte
Looked far and saw no toothsome herb or fruit
In all that yellow barren dim with heat.
But now the wasting body cried for meat,

And sickness was upon him. Game should pass,
Nor deign to fear the mighty hunter Glass,
But curiously sniffing, pause to stare.

Now while thus musing, Hugh became aware
Of some low murmur, phasic and profound,
Scarce risen o'er the border line of sound.
It might have been the coursing of his blood,
Or thunder heard remotely, or a flood
Flung down a wooded valley far away.
Yet that had been no weather-breeding day;
'Twould frost that night; amid the thirsty land
All streams ran thin; and when he pressed a hand
On either ear, the world seemed very still.

The deep-worn channel of the little rill
Here fell away to eastward, rising, rough
With old rain-furrows, to a lofty bluff
That faced the river with a yellow wall.
Thereto, perplexed, Hugh set about to crawl,
Nor reached the summit till the sun was low.
Far-spread, shade-dimpled in the level glow,
The still land told not whence the murmur grew;
But where the green strip melted into blue
Far down the winding valley of the stream,
Hugh saw what seemed the tempest of a dream

At mimic havoc in the timber-glooms.
As from the sweeping of gigantic brooms,
A dust cloud deepened down the dwindling river;
Upon the distant tree-tops ran a shiver
And huddled thickets writhed as in a gale.

On creeps the windless tempest up the vale,
The while the murmur deepens to a roar,
As with the wider yawning of a door.
And now the agitated green gloom gapes
To belch a flood of countless dusky shapes
That mill and wrangle in a turbid flow —
Migrating myriads of the buffalo
Bound for the winter pastures of the Platte!

Exhausted, faint with need of meat, Hugh sat
And watched the mounting of the living flood.
Down came the night, and like a blot of blood
The lopped moon weltered in the dust-bleared
East.
Sleep came and gave a Barmecidal feast.
About a merry flame were simmering
Sweet haunches of the calving of the Spring,
And tender tongues that never tasted snow,
And marrow bones that yielded to a blow
Such treasure! Hugh awoke with gnashing teeth,
And heard the mooing drone of cows beneath,

The roll of hoofs, the challenge of the bull.
So sounds a freshet when the banks are full
And bursting brush-jams bellow to the croon
Of water through green leaves. The ragged moon
Now drenched the valley in an eerie rain:
Below, the semblance of a hurricane;
Above, the perfect calm of brooding frost,
Through which the wolves in doleful tenson tossed
From hill to hill the ancient hunger-song.
In broken sleep Hugh rolled the chill night long,
Half conscious of the flowing flesh below.
And now he trailed a bison in the snow
That deepened till he could not lift his feet.
Again, he battled for a chunk of meat
With some gray beast that fought with icy fang.
And when he woke, the wolves no longer sang;
White dawn athwart a white world smote the hill,
And thunder rolled along the valley still.

Morn, wiping up the frost as with a sponge,
Day on the steep and down the nightward plunge,
And Twilight saw the myriads moving on.
Dust to the westward where the van had gone,

And dust and muffled thunder in the east!
Hugh starved while gazing on a Titan feast.
The tons of beef, that eddied there and swirled,
Had stilled the crying hungers of the world,
Yet not one little morsel was for him.

The red sun, pausing on the dusty rim,
Induced a panic aspect of his plight:
The herd would pass and vanish in the night
And be another dream to cling and flout.
Now scanning all the summit round about,
Amid the rubble of the ancient drift
He saw a bowlder. 'Twas too big to lift,
Yet he might roll it. Painfully and slow
He worked it to the edge, then let it go
And breathlessly expectant watched it fall.
It hurtled down the leaning yellow wall,
And bounding from a brushy ledge's brow,
It barely grazed the buttocks of a cow
And made a moment's eddy where it struck.

In peevish wrath Hugh cursed his evil luck,
And seizing rubble, gave his fury vent
By pelting bison till his strength was spent:
So might a child assail the crowding sea!
Then, sick at heart and musing bitterly,
He shambled down the steep way to the creek,
And having stayed the tearing buzzard beak

With breadroot and the waters of the rill,
Slept till the white of morning o'er the hill
Was like a whisper groping in a hush.
The stream's low trill seemed loud. The tumbled
brush
And rumpled tree-tops in the flat below,
Upon a fog that clung like spectral snow,
Lay motionless; nor any sound was there.
No frost had fallen, but the crystal air
Smacked of the autumn, and a heavy dew
Lay hoar upon the grass. There came on Hugh
A picture, vivid in the moment's thrill,
Of martialed corn-shocks marching up a hill
And spiked fields dotted with the pumpkin's
gold.
It vanished; and, a-shiver with the cold,
He brooded on the mockeries of Chance,
The shrewd malignity of Circumstance
That either gave too little or too much.

Yet, with the fragment of a hope for crutch,
His spirit rallied, and he rose to go,
Though each stiff joint resisted as a foe
And that old hip-wound battled with his will.
So down along the channel of the rill
Unto the vale below he fought his way.
The frore fog, rifting in the risen day,

Revealed the havoc of the living flood —
The river shallows beaten into mud,
The slender saplings shattered in the crush,
All lower leafage stripped, the tousled brush
Despoiled of fruitage, winter-thin, aghast.
And where the avalanche of hoofs had passed
It seemed nor herb nor grass had ever been.
And this the hard-won paradise, wherein
A food-devouring plethora of food
Had come to make a starving solitude!

Yet hope and courage mounted with the sun.
Surely, Hugh thought, some ill-begotten one
Of all that striving mass had lost the strife
And perished in the headlong stream of life —
A feast to fill the bellies of the strong,
That still the weak might perish. All day long
He struggled down the stricken vale, nor saw
What thing he sought. But when the twilight awe
Was creeping in, beyond a bend arose
A din as though the kiotes and the crows
Fought there with shrill and raucous battle cries.

Small need had Hugh to ponder and surmise
What guerdon beak and fang contended for.
Within himself the oldest cause of war

Brought forth upon the instant fang and beak.
He too would fight! Nor had he far to seek
Amid the driftwood strewn about the sand
For weapons suited to a brawny hand
With such a purpose. Armed with club and stone
He forged ahead into the battle zone,
And from a screening thicket spied his foes.

He saw a bison carcass black with crows,
And over it a welter of black wings,
And round about, a press of tawny rings
That, like a muddy current churned to foam
Upon a snag, flashed whitely in the gloam
With naked teeth; while close about the prize
Red beaks and muzzles bloody to the eyes
Betrayed how worth a struggle was the feast.

Then came on Hugh the fury of the beast —
To eat or to be eaten! Better so
To die contending with a living foe,
Than fight the yielding distance and the lack.
Masked by the brush he opened the attack,
And ever where a stone or club fell true,
About the stricken one an uproar grew
And brute tore brute, forgetful of the prey,
Until the whole pack tumbled in the fray

With bleeding flanks and lacerated throats.
Then, as the leader of a host who notes
The cannon-wrought confusion of the foe,
Hugh seized the moment for a daring blow.

The wolf's a coward, who, in goodly packs,
May counterfeit the courage that he lacks
And with a craven's fury crush the bold.
But when the disunited mass that rolled
In suicidal strife, became aware
How some great beast that shambled like a bear
Bore down with roaring challenge, fell a hush
Upon the pack, some slinking to the brush
With tails a-droop; while some that whined in pain
Writhed off on reddened trails. With bristled mane
Before the flying stones a bolder few
Snarled menace at the foe as they withdrew
To fill the outer dusk with clamorings.
Aloft upon a moaning wind of wings
The crows with harsh, vituperative cries
Now saw a gray wolf of prodigious size
Devouring with the frenzy of the starved.
Thus fell to Hugh a bison killed and carved;
And so Fate's whims mysteriously trend —
Woe in the silken meshes of the friend,
Weal in the might and menace of the foe.

But with the fading of the afterglow
The routed wolves found courage to return:
Amid the brush Hugh saw their eye-balls burn;
And well he knew how futile stick and stone
Should prove by night to keep them from their
own.
Better is less with safety, than enough
With ruin. He retreated to a bluff,
And scarce had reached it when the pack swooped
in
Upon the carcass.
All night long, the din
Of wrangling wolves assailed the starry air,
While high above them in a brushy lair
Hugh dreamed of gnawing at the bloody feast.

Along about the blanching of the east,
When sleep is weirdest and a moment's flight,
Remembered coextensive with the night,
May teem with hapful years; as light in smoke,
Upon the jumble of Hugh's dreaming broke
A buzz of human voices. Once again
He rode the westward trail with Henry's men —
Hoof-smitten leagues consuming in a dust.
And now the nightmare of that broken trust
Was on him, and he lay beside the spring,
A corpse, yet heard the muffled parleying

Above him of the looters of the dead:
But when he might have riddled what they said,
The babble flattened to a blur of gray —
And lo, upon a bleak frontier of day,
The spent moon staring down! A little space
Hugh scrutinized the featureless white face,
As though 'twould speak. But when again the sound
Grew up, and seemed to come from under ground,
He cast the drowse, and peering down the slope,
Beheld what set at grapple fear and hope —
Three Indian horsemen riding at a jog!
Their ponies, wading belly-deep in fog,
That clung along the valley, seemed to swim,
And through a thinner vapor moving dim,
The men were ghost-like.
Could they be the Sioux?
Almost the wish became belief in Hugh.
Or were they Rees? As readily the doubt
Withheld him from the hazard of a shout.
And while he followed them with baffled gaze,
Grown large and vague, dissolving in the haze,
They vanished westward.
Knowing well the wont
Of Indians moving on the bison-hunt,
Forthwith Hugh guessed the early riders were
The outflung feelers of a tribe a-stir

Like some huge cat gone mousing. So he lay
Concealed, impatient with the sleepy day
That dawdled in the dawning. Would it bring
Good luck or ill? His eager questioning,
As crawling fog, took on a golden hue
From sunrise. He was waiting for the Sioux,
Their parfleche panniers fat with sun-dried
maize
And wasna! From the mint of evil days
He would coin tales and be no begging guest
About the tribal feast-fires burning west,
But kinsman of the blood of daring men.
And when the crawler stood erect again —
O Friend-Betrayer at the Big Horn's mouth,
Beware of someone riding from the South
To do the deed that he had lived to do!

Now when the sun stood hour-high in the blue,
From where a cloud of startled blackbirds rose
Down stream, a panic tumult broke the doze
Of windless morning. What unwelcome news
Embroiled the parliament of feathered shrews?
A boiling cloud against the sun they lower,
Flackering strepent; now a sooty shower,
Big-flaked, squall-driven westward, down they
flutter
To set a clump of cottonwoods a-sputter

With cold black fire! And once again, some
shock
Of sight or sound flings panic in the flock —
Gray boughs exploding in a ruck of birds!

What augury in orniscopic words
Did yon swart sibyls on the morning scrawl?

Now broke abruptly through the clacking
brawl
A camp-dog's barking and a pony's neigh;
Whereat a running nicker fled away,
Attenuating to a rearward hush;
And lo! in hailing distance 'round the brush
That fringed a jutting bluff's base like a beard
Upon a stubborn chin out-thrust, appeared
A band of mounted warriors! In their van
Aloof and lonely rode a gnarled old man
Upon a piebald stallion. Stooped was he
Beneath his heavy years, yet haughtily
He wore them like the purple of a king.
Keen for a goal, as from the driving string
A barbed and feathered arrow truly sped,
His face was like a flinty arrow-head,
And brooded westward in a steady stare.
There was a sift of winter in his hair,
The bleakness of brown winter in his look.

Hugh saw, and huddled closer in his nook.
Fled the bright dreams of safety, feast and rest
Before that keen, cold brooder on the West,
As gaudy leaves before the blizzard flee.
'Twas Elk Tongue, fighting chieftain of the Ree,
With all his people at his pony's tail —
Full two-score lodges emptied on the trail
Of hunger!
On they came in ravelled rank,
And many a haggard eye and hollow flank
Made plain how close and pitilessly pressed
The enemy that drove them to the West —
Such foeman as no warrior ever slew.
A tale of cornfields plundered by the Sioux
Their sagging panniers told. Yet rich enough
They seemed to him who watched them from the bluff;
Yea, pampered nigh the limit of desire!
No friend had filched from them the boon of fire
And hurled them shivering back upon the beast.
Erect they went, full-armed to strive, at least;
And nightly in a cozy ember-glow
Hope fed them with a dream of buffalo
Soon to be overtaken. After that,
Home with their Pawnee cousins on the Platte,
Much meat and merry-making till the Spring.

On dragged the rabble like a fraying string
Too tautly drawn. The rich-in-ponies rode,
For much is light and little is a load
Among all heathen with no Christ to save!
Gray seekers for the yet begrudging grave,
Bent with the hoeing of forgotten maize,
Wood-hewers, water-bearers all their days,
Toiled 'neath the life-long hoarding of their packs.
And nursing squaws, their babies at their backs
Whining because the milk they got was thinned
In dugs of famine, strove as with a wind.
Invincibly equipped with their first bows
The striplings strutted, knowing, as youth knows,
How fair life is beyond the beckoning blue.
Cold-eyed the grandsires plodded, for they knew,
As frosted heads may know, how all trails merge
In what lone land. Raw maidens on the verge
Of some half-guessed-at mystery of life,
In wistful emulation of the wife
Stooped to the fancied burden of the race;
Nor read upon the withered granddam's face
The scrawled tale of that burden and its woe.
Slant to the sagging poles of the travaux,
Numb to the squaw's harsh railing and the goad,
The lean cayuses toiled. And children rode
A-top the household plunder, wonder-eyed
To see a world flow by on either side,

From blue air sprung to vanish in blue air,
A river of enchantments.
Here and there
The camp-curs loped upon a vexing quest
Where countless hoofs had left a palimpsest,
A taunting snarl of broken scents. And now
They sniff the clean bones of the bison cow,
Howl to the skies; and now with manes a-rough
They nose the man-smell leading to the bluff;
Pause puzzled at the base and sweep the height
With questioning yelps. Aloft, crouched low in fright,
Already Hugh can hear the braves' guffaws
At their scorned foeman yielded to the squaws'
Inverted mercy and a slow-won grave.
Since Earth's first mother scolded from a cave
And that dear riddle of her love began,
No man has wrought a weapon against man
To match the deadly venom brewed above
The lean, blue, blinding heart-fires of her love.
Well might the hunted hunter shrink aghast!
But thrice three seasons yet should swell the past,
So was it writ, ere Fate's keen harriers
Should run Hugh Glass to earth.
The hungry curs
Took up again the tangled scent of food.
Still flowed the rabble through the solitude —

A thinning stream now of the halt, the weak
And all who had not very far to seek
For that weird pass whereto the fleet are slow,
And out of it keen winds and numbing blow,
Shrill with the fleeing voices of the dead.
Slowly the scattered stragglers, making head
Against their weariness as up a steep,
Fled westward; and the morning lay asleep
Upon the valley fallen wondrous still.

Hugh kept his nook, nor ventured forth, until
The high day toppled to the blue descent,
When thirst became a master, and he went
With painful scrambling down the broken scarp,
Lured by the stream, that like a smitten harp
Rippled a muted music to the sun.

Scarce had he crossed the open flat, and won
The half-way fringe of willows, when he saw,
Slow plodding up the trail, a tottering squaw
Whose years made big the little pack she bore.
Crouched in the brush Hugh watched her. More
and more
The little burden tempted him. Why not?
A thin cry throttled in that lonely spot
Could bring no succor. None should ever know,
Save him, the feasted kiote and the crow,

Why one poor crone found not the midnight fire.
Nor would the vanguard, quick with young desire,
Devouring distance westward like a flame,
Regret this ash dropped rearward.
On she came,
Slow-footed, staring blankly on the sand —
So close now that it needed but a hand
Out-thrust to overthrow her; aye, to win
That priceless spoil, a little tent of skin,
A flint and steel, a kettle and a knife!
What did the dying with the means of life,
That thus the fit-to-live should suffer lack?

Poised for the lunge, what whimsy held him back?
Why did he gaze upon the passing prize,
Nor seize it? Did some gust of ghostly cries
Awaken round her — whisperings of Eld,
Wraith-voices of the babies she had held,
Guarding the milkless paps, the withered womb?
Far down a moment's cleavage in the gloom
Of backward years Hugh saw her now — nor saw
The little burden and the feeble squaw,
But someone sitting haloed like a saint
Beside a hearth long cold. The dream grew faint;

And when he looked again, the crone was gone
Beyond a clump of willow.
Crawling on,
He reached the river. Leaning to a pool
Calm in its cup of sand, he saw — a fool!
A wild, wry mask of mirth, a-grin, yet grim,
Rose there to claim identity with him
And ridicule his folly. Pity? Faugh!
Who pitied this, that it should spare a squaw
Spent in the spawning of a scorpion brood?

He drank and hastened down the solitude,
Fleeing that thing which fleered him, and was
Hugh.
And as he went his self-accusing grew
And with it, anger; till it came to seem
That somehow some sly Jamie of a dream
Had plundered him again; and he was strong
With lust of vengeance and the sting of wrong,
So that he travelled faster than for days.

Now when the eve in many-shaded grays
Wove the day's shroud, and through the lower
lands
Lean fog-arms groped with chilling spirit hands,
Hugh paused perplexed. Elusive, haunting, dim,
As though some memory that stirred in him,

Invasive of the real, outgrew the dream,
There came upon the breeze that stole up stream
A whiff of woodsmoke.
'Twixt a beat and beat
Of Hugh's deluded heart, it seemed the sweet
Allure of home. — A brief way, and one came
Upon the clearing where the sumach flame
Ran round the forest-fringe; and just beyond
One saw the slough grass nodding in the pond
Unto the sleepy troll the bullfrogs sung.
And then one saw the place where one was young —
The log-house sitting on a stumpy rise.
Hearth-lit within, its windows were as eyes
That love much and are faded with old tears.
It seemed regretful of a life's arrears,
Yet patient, with a self-denying poise,
Like some old mother for her bearded boys
Waiting sweet-hearted and a little sad. —
So briefly dreamed a recrudescent lad
Beneath gray hairs, and fled.
Through chill and damp
Still groped the odor, hinting at a camp,
A two-tongued herald wooing hope and fear.
Was hospitality or danger near?
A Sioux war-party hot upon the trail,
Or laggard Rees? Hugh crawled across the vale,

Toiled up along a zigzag gully's bed
And reached a bluff's top. In a smudge of red
The West burned low. Hill summits, yet alight,
And pools of gloom anticipating night
Mottled the landscape to the dull blue rim.
What freak of fancy had imposed on him?
Could one smell home-smoke fifty years away?
He saw no fire; no pluming spire of gray
Rose in the dimming air to woo or warn.

He lay upon the bare height, fagged, forlorn,
And old times came upon him with the creep
Of subtle drugs that put the will to sleep
And wreak doom to the soothing of a dream.
So listlessly he scanned the sombrous stream,
Scarce seeing what he scanned. The dark increased;
A chill wind wakened from the frowning east
And soughed along the vale.
Then with a start
He saw what broke the torpor of his heart
And set the wild blood free. From where he lay
An easy point-blank rifle-shot away,
Appeared a mystic germinating spark
That in some secret garden of the dark
Upreared a frail, blue, nodding stem, whereon
A ruddy lily flourished — and was gone!

What miracle was this? Again it grew,
The scarlet blossom on the stem of blue,
And withered back again into the night.

With pounding heart Hugh crawled along the height
And reached a point of vantage whence, below,
He saw capricious witch-lights dim and glow
Like far-spent embers quickened in a breeze.
'Twas surely not a camp of laggard Rees,
Nor yet of Siouan warriors hot in chase.
Dusk and a quiet bivouacked in that place.
A doddering vagrant with numb hands, the Wind
Fumbled the dying ashes there, and whined.
It was the day-old camp-ground of the foe!

Glad-hearted now, Hugh gained the vale below,
Keen to possess once more the ancient gift.
Nearing the glow, he saw vague shadows lift
Out of the painted gloom of smouldering logs —
Distorted bulks that bristled, and were dogs
Snarling at this invasion of their lair.
Hugh charged upon them, growling like a bear,
And sent them whining.
Now again to view
The burgeoning of scarlet, gold and blue,
The immemorial miracle of fire!
From heaped-up twigs a tenuous smoky spire

Arose, and made an altar of the place.
The spark-glow, faint upon the grizzled face,
Transformed the kneeling outcast to a priest;
And, native of the light-begetting East,
The Wind became a chanting acolyte.
These two, entempled in the vaulted night,
Breathed conjuries of interwoven breath.
Then, hark! — the snapping of the chains of Death!
From dead wood, lo! — the epiphanic god!

Once more the freightage of the fennel rod
Dissolved the chilling pall of Jovian scorn.
The wonder of the resurrection morn,
The face apocalyptic and the sword,
The glory of the many-symboled Lord,
Hugh, lifting up his eyes about him, saw!
And something in him like a vernal thaw,
Voiced with the sound of many waters, ran
And quickened to the laughter of a man.

Light-heartedly he fed the singing flame
And took its blessing: till a soft sleep came
With dreaming that was like a pleasant tale.

The far white dawn was peering up the vale
When he awoke to indolent content.
A few shorn stars in pale astonishment

Were huddled westward; and the fire was low.
Three scrawny camp-curs, mustered in a row
Beyond the heap of embers, heads askew,
Ears pricked to question what the man might do,
Sat wistfully regardant. / He arose;
And they, grown canny in a school of blows,
Skulked to a safer distance, there to raise
A dolorous chanting of the evil days,
Their gray breath like the body of a prayer.
Hugh nursed the sullen embers to a flare,
Then set about to view an empty camp
As once before; but now no smoky lamp
Of blear suspicion searched a gloom of fraud
Wherein a smirking Friendship, like a bawd,
Embraced a coward Safety; now no grief,
'Twixt hideous revelation and belief,
Made womanish the man; but glad to strive,
With hope to nerve him and a will to drive,
He knew that he could finish in the race.
The staring impassivity of space
No longer mocked; the dreadful skyward climb,
Where distance seemed identical with time,
Was past now; and that mystic something, luck,
Without which worth may flounder in the ruck,
Had turned to him again.
So flamelike soared
Rekindled hope in him as he explored

Among the ash-heaps; and the lean dogs ran
And barked about him, for the love of man
Wistful, yet fearing. Surely he could find
Some trifle in the hurry left behind —
Or haply hidden in the trampled sand —
That to the cunning of a needy hand
Should prove the master-key of circumstance:
For 'tis the little gifts of grudging Chance,
Well husbanded, make victors.

Long he sought
Without avail; and, crawling back, he thought
Of how the dogs were growing less afraid,
And how one might be skinned without a blade.
A flake of flint might do it: he would try.
And then he saw — or did the servile eye
Trick out a mental image like the real?
He saw a glimmering of whetted steel
Beside a heap now washed with morning light!

Scarce more of marvel and the sense of might
Moved Arthur when he reached a hand to take
The fay-wrought brand emerging from the lake,
Whereby a kingdom should be lopped of strife,
Than Hugh now, pouncing on a trader's knife
Worn hollow in the use of bounteous days!

And now behold a rich man by the blaze
Of his own hearth — a lord of steel and fire!

Not having, but the measure of desire
Determines wealth. Who gaining more, seek most,
Are ever the pursuers of a ghost
And lend their fleetness to the fugitive.
For Hugh, long goaded by the wish to live,
What gage of mastery in fire and tool! —
That twain wherewith Time put the brute to school,
Evolving Man, the maker and the seer.

'Twixt urging hunger and restraining fear
The gaunt dogs hovered round the man; while he
Cajoled them in the language of the Ree
And simulated feeding them with sand,
Until the boldest dared to sniff his hand,
Bare-fanged and with conciliative whine.
Through bristled mane the quick blade bit the spine
Below the skull; and as a flame-struck thing
The body humped and shuddered, withering;
The lank limbs huddled, wilted.
Now to skin
The carcass, dig a hole, arrange therein
And fix the pelt with stakes, the flesh-side up.
This done, he shaped the bladder to a cup

On willow withes, and filled the rawhide pot
With water from the river — made it hot
With roasted stones, and set the meat a-boil.
Those days of famine and prodigious toil
Had wrought bulimic cravings in the man,
And scarce the cooking of the flesh outran
The eating of it. As a fed flame towers
According to the fuel it devours,
His hunger with indulgence grew, nor ceased
Until the kettle, empty of the feast,
Went dim, the sky and valley, merging, swirled
In subtle smoke that smothered out the world.
Hugh slept.

And then — as divers, mounting, sunder
A murmuring murk to blink in sudden wonder
Upon a dazzling upper deep of blue —
He rose again to consciousness, and knew
The low sun beating slantly on his face.

Now indolently gazing round the place,
He noted how the curs had revelled there —
The bones and entrails gone; some scattered hair
Alone remaining of the pot of hide.
How strange he had not heard them at his side!
And granting but one afternoon had passed,
What could have made the fire burn out so fast?

Had daylight waned, night fallen, morning crept,
Noon blazed, a new day dwindled while he slept?
And was the friendlike fire a Jamie too?
Across the twilit consciousness of Hugh
The old obsession like a wounded bird
Fluttered.
He got upon his knees and stirred
The feathery ash; but not a spark was there.
Already with the failing sun the air
Went keen, betokening a frosty night.
Hugh winced with something like the clutch of fright.
How could he bear the torture, how sustain
The sting of that antiquity of pain
Rolled back upon him — face again the foe,
That yielding victor, fleet in being slow,
That huge, impersonal malevolence?

So readily the tentacles of sense
Root in the larger standard of desire,
That Hugh fell farther in the loss of fire
Than in the finding of it he arose.
And suddenly the place grew strange, as grows
A friend's house, when the friend is on his bier,
And all that was familiar there and dear
Puts on a blank, inhospitable look.

Hugh set his face against the east, and took
That dreariest of ways, the trail of flight.
He would outcrawl the shadow of the night
And have the day to blanket him in sleep.
But as he went to meet the gloom a-creep,
Bemused with life's irrational rebuffs,
A yelping of the dogs among the bluffs
Rose, hunger-whetted, stabbing; rent the pall
Of evening silence; blunted to a drawl
Amid the arid waterways, and died.
And as the echo to the sound replied,
So in the troubled mind of Hugh was wrought
A reminiscent cry of thought to thought
That, groping, found an unlocked door to life:
The dogs — keen flint to skin one — then the knife
Discovered. Why, that made a flint and steel!
No further with the subtle foe at heel
He fled; for all about him in the rock,
To waken when the needy hand might knock,
A savior slept! He found a flake of flint,
Scraped from his shirt a little wad of lint,
Spilled on it from the smitten stone a shower
Of ruddy seed; and saw the mystic flower
That genders its own summer, bloom anew!

And so capricious luck came back to Hugh;
And he was happier than he had been

Since Jamie to that unforgiven sin
Had yielded, ages back upon the Grand.
Now he would turn the cunning of his hand
To carving crutches, that he might arise,
Be manlike, lift more rapidly the skies
That crouched between his purpose and the mark.
The warm glow housed him from the frosty dark,
And there he wrought in very joyous mood
And sang by fits — whereat the solitude
Set laggard singers snatching at the tune.
The gaunter for their hunt, the dogs came soon
To haunt the shaken fringes of the glow,
And, pitching voices to the timeless woe,
Outwailed the lilting. So the Chorus sings
Of terror, pity and the tears of things
When most the doomed protagonist is gay.
The stars swarmed over, and the front of day
Whitened above a white world, and the sun
Rose on a sleeper with a task well done,
Nor roused him till its burning topped the blue.

When Hugh awoke, there woke a younger Hugh,
Now half a stranger; and 'twas good to feel
With ebbing sleep the old green vigor steal,
Thrilling, along his muscles and his veins,
As in a lull of winter-cleansing rains
The gray bough quickens to the sap a-creep.

It chanced the dogs lay near him, sound asleep,
Curled nose to buttock in the noonday glow.
He killed the larger with a well-aimed blow,
Skinned, dressed and set it roasting on a spit;
And when 'twas cooked, ate sparingly of it,
For need might yet make little seem a feast.

Fording the river shallows, south by east
He hobbled now along a withered rill
That issued where old floods had gashed the hill —
A cyclopean portal yawning sheer.
No storm of countless hoofs had entered here:
It seemed a place where nothing ever comes
But change of season. He could hear the plums
Plash in the frosted thicket, over-lush;
While, like a spirit lisping in the hush,
The crisp leaves whispered round him as they fell.
And ever now and then the autumn spell
Was broken by an ululating cry
From where far back with muzzle to the sky
The lone dog followed, mourning. Darkness came;
And huddled up beside a cozy flame,
Hugh's sleep was but a momentary flight
Across a little shadow into light.

So day on day he toiled: and when, afloat
Above the sunset like a stygian boat,

The new moon bore the spectre of the old,
He saw — a dwindling strip of blue outrolled —
The valley of the tortuous Cheyenne.
And ere the half moon sailed the night again,
Those far lone leagues had sloughed their garb of
blue,
And dwindled, dwindled, dwindled after Hugh,
Until he saw that Titan of the plains,
The sinewy Missouri. Dearth of rains
Had made the Giant gaunt as he who saw.
This loud Chain-Smasher of a late March thaw
Seemed never to have bellowed at his banks;
And yet, with staring ribs and hollow flanks,
The urge of an indomitable will
Proclaimed him of the breed of giants still;
And where the current ran a boiling track,
'Twas like the muscles of a mighty back
Grown Atlantean in the wrestler's craft.

Hugh set to work and built a little raft
Of driftwood bound with grapevines. So it fell
That one with an amazing tale to tell
Came drifting to the gates of Kiowa.

IV

THE RETURN OF THE GHOST

Not long Hugh let the lust of vengeance gnaw
Upon him idling; though the tale he told
And what report proclaimed him, were as gold
To buy a winter's comfort at the Post.
"I can not rest; for I am but the ghost
Of someone murdered by a friend," he said,
"So long as yonder traitor thinks me dead,
Aye, buried in the bellies of the crows
And kiotes!"
Whereupon said one of those
Who heard him, noting how the old man shook
As with a chill: "God fend that one should look
With such a blizzard of a face for me!"
For he went grayer like a poplar tree
That shivers, ruffling to the first faint breath
Of storm, while yet the world is still as death
Save where, far off, the kenneled thunders bay.

So brooding, he grew stronger day by day,
Until at last he laid the crutches by.
And then one evening came a rousing cry

From where the year's last keelboat hove in view
Around the bend, its swarthy, sweating crew
Slant to the shouldered line.
Men sang that night
In Kiowa, and by the ruddy light
Of leaping fires amid the wooden walls
The cups went round; and there were merry brawls
Of bearded lads no older for the beard;
And laughing stories vied with tales of weird
By stream and prairie trail and mountain pass,
Until the tipsy Bourgeois bawled for Glass
To 'shame these with a man's tale fit to hear.'

The graybeard, sitting where the light was blear,
With little heart for revelry, began
His story, told as of another man
Who, loving late, loved much and was betrayed.
He spoke unwitting how his passion played
Upon them, how their eyes grew soft or hard
With what he told; yet something of the bard
He seemed, and his the purpose that is art's,
Whereby men make a vintage of their hearts
And with the wine of beauty deaden pain.
Low-toned, insistent as October rain,
His voice beat on; and now and then would flit
Across the melancholy gray of it

A glimmer of cold fire that, like the flare
Of soundless lightning, showed a world made bare,
Green Summer slain and all its leafage stripped.

And bronze jaws tightened, brawny hands were gripped,
As though each hearer had a fickle friend.
But when the old man might have made an end,
Rounding the story to a peaceful close
At Kiowa, songlike his voice arose,
The grinning gray mask lifted and the eyes
Burned as a bard's who sees and prophesies,
Conning the future as a time long gone.
Swaying to rhythm the dizzy tale plunged on
Even to the cutting of the traitor's throat,
And ceased — as though a bloody strangling smote
The voice of that gray chanter, drunk with doom.
And there was shuddering in the blue-smeared gloom
Of fallen fires. It seemed the deed was done
Before their eyes who heard.
The morrow's sun,
Low over leagues of frost-enchanted plain,
Saw Glass upon his pilgrimage again,
Northbound as hunter for the keelboat's crew.
And many times the wide autumnal blue

Burned out and darkened to a deep of stars;
And still they toiled among the snags and bars —
Those lean up-stream men, straining at the rope,
Lashed by the doubt and strengthened by the hope
Of backward winter — engines wrought of bone
And muscle, panting for the Yellowstone,
Bend after bend and yet more bends away.
Now was the river like a sandy bay
At ebb-tide, and the far-off cutbank's boom
Mocked them in shallows; now 'twas like a flume
With which the toilers, barely creeping, strove.
And bend by bend the selfsame poplar grove,
Set on the selfsame headland, so it seemed,
Confronted them, as though they merely dreamed
Of passing one drear point.
So on and up
Past where the tawny Titan gulps the cup
Of Cheyenne waters, past the Moreau's mouth;
And still wry league and stubborn league fell south,
Becoming haze and weary memory.
Then past the empty lodges of the Ree
That gaped at cornfields plundered by the Sioux;
And there old times came mightily on Hugh,
For much of him was born and buried there.
Some troubled glory of that wind-tossed hair

Was on the trampled corn; the lonely skies,
So haunted with the blue of Jamie's eyes,
Seemed taunting him; and through the frosted
wood
Along the flat, where once their tent had stood,
A chill wind sorrowed, and the blackbirds' brawl
Amid the funeral torches of the Fall
Ran raucously, a desecrating din.

Past where the Cannon Ball and Heart come in
They labored. Now the Northwest 'woke at last.
The gaunt bluffs bellowed back the trumpet blast
Of charging winds that made the sandbars smoke.
To breathe now was to gulp fine sand, and choke:
The stinging air was sibilant with whips.
Leaning the more and with the firmer grips,
Still northward the embattled toilers pressed
To where the river yaws into the west.
There stood the Mandan village.
Now began
The chaining of the Titan. Drift-ice ran.
The wingéd hounds of Winter ceased to bay.
The stupor of a doom completed lay
Upon the world. The biting darkness fell.
Out in the night, resounding as a well,
They heard the deckplanks popping in a vise
Of frost; all night the smithies of the ice

Reëchoed with the griding jar and clink
Of ghostly hammers welding link to link:
And morning found the world without a sound.
There lay the stubborn Prairie Titan bound,
To wait the far-off Heraclean thaw,
Though still in silent rage he strove to gnaw
The ragged shackles knitting at his breast.

And so the boatman won a winter's rest
Among the Mandan traders: but for Hugh
There yet remained a weary work to do.
Across the naked country west by south
His purpose called him at the Big Horn's mouth —
Three hundred miles of winging for the crow;
But by the river trail that he must go
'Twas seven hundred winding miles at least.

So now he turned his back upon the feast,
Snug ease, the pleasant tale, the merry mood,
And took the bare, foot-sounding solitude
Northwestward. Long they watched him from the Post,
Skied on a bluff-rim, fading like a ghost
At gray cock-crow; and hooded in his breath,
He seemed indeed a fugitive from Death
On whom some tatter of the shroud still clung.
Blank space engulfed him.

Now the moon was young

When he set forth; and day by day he strode,
His scarce healed wounds upon him like a load;
And dusk by dusk his fire outflared the moon
That waxed until it wrought a spectral noon
At nightfall. Then he came to where, awhirl
With Spring's wild rage, the snow-born Titan girl,
A skyey wonder on her virgin face,
Receives the virile Yellowstone's embrace
And bears the lusty Seeker for the Sea.
A bleak, horizon-wide serenity
Clung round the valley where the twain lay dead.
A winding sheet was on the marriage bed.

'Twas warmer now; the sky grew overcast;
And as Hugh strode southwestward, all the vast
Gray void seemed suddenly astir with wings
And multitudinary whisperings —
The muffled sibilance of tumbling snow.
It seemed no more might living waters flow,
Moon gleam, star glint, dawn smoulder through, bird sing,
Or ever any fair familiar thing
Be so again. The outworn winds were furled.
Weird weavers of the twilight of a world
Wrought, thread on kissing thread, the web of doom.
Grown insubstantial in the knitted gloom,

The bluffs loomed eerie, and the scanty trees
Were dwindled to remote dream-traceries
That never might be green or shield a nest.

All day with swinging stride Hugh forged south-
west
Along the Yellowstone's smooth-paven stream,
A dream-shape moving in a troubled dream;
And all day long the whispering weavers wove.
And close on dark he came to where a grove
Of cottonwoods rose tall and shadow-thin
Against the northern bluffs. He camped therein
And with cut boughs made shelter as he might.

Close pressed the blackness of the snow-choked
night
About him, and his fire of plum wood purred.
Athwart a soft penumbral drowse he heard
The tumbling snowflakes sighing all around,
Till sleep transformed it to a Summer sound
Of boyish memory — susurrant bees,
The Southwind in the tousled apple trees
And slumber flowing from their leafy gloom.

He wakened to the cottonwoods' deep boom.
Black fury was the world. The northwest's roar,
As of a surf upon a shipwreck shore,

Plunged high above him from the sheer bluff's
verge;
And, like the backward sucking of the surge,
Far fled the sobbing of the wild snow-spray.

Black blindness grew white blindness — and 'twas
day.
All being now seemed narrowed to a span
That held a sputtering wood fire and a man;
Beyond was tumult and a whirling maze.
The trees were but a roaring in a haze;
The sheer bluff-wall that took the blizzard's
charge
Was thunder flung along the hidden marge
Of chaos, stridden by the ghost of light.
White blindness grew black blindness — and 'twas
night
Wherethrough nor moon nor any star might grope.

Two days since, Hugh had killed an antelope
And what remained sufficed the time of storm.
The snow, banked round his shelter, kept him warm
And there was wood to burn for many a day.

The third dawn, oozing through a smudge of gray,
Awoke him. It was growing colder fast.
Still from the bluff high over boomed the blast,

But now it took the void with numbing wings.
By noon the woven mystery of things
Frayed raggedly, and through a sudden rift
At length Hugh saw the beetling bluff-wall lift
A sturdy shoulder to the flying rack.
Slowly the sense of distances came back
As with the waning day the great wind fell.
The pale sun set upon a frozen hell.
The wolves howled.

Hugh had left the Mandan town
When, heifer-horned, the maiden moon lies down
Beside the sea of evening. Now she rose
Scar-faced and staring blankly on the snows
While yet the twilight tarried in the west;
And more and more she came a tardy guest
As Hugh pushed onward through the frozen waste
Until she stole on midnight shadow-faced,
A haggard spectre; then no more appeared.

'Twas on that time the man of hoary beard
Paused in the early twilight, looming lone
Upon a bluff-rim of the Yellowstone,
And peered across the white stream to the south
Where in the flatland at the Big Horn's mouth
The new fort stood that Henry's men had built.

What perfect peace for such a nest of guilt?
What satisfied immunity from woe!
Yon sprawling shadow, pied with candle-glow
And plumed with sparkling wood-smoke, might
have been
A homestead with the children gathered in
To share its bounty through the holidays.
Hugh saw their faces round the gay hearth-blaze:
The hale old father in a mood for yarns
Or boastful of the plenty of his barns,
Fruitage of honest toil and grateful lands;
And, half a stranger to her folded hands,
The mother with October in her hair
And August in her face. One moment there
Hugh saw it. Then the monstrous brutal fact
Wiped out the dream and goaded him to act,
Though now to act seemed strangely like a dream.

Descending from the bluff, he crossed the stream,
The dry snow fifing to his eager stride.
Reaching the fort stockade, he paused to bide
The passing of a whimsy. Was it true?
Or was this but the fretted wraith of Hugh
Whose flesh had fed the kiotes long ago?

Still through a chink he saw the candle-glow,
So like an eye that brazened out a wrong.
And now there came a flight of muffled song,

The rhythmic thudding of a booted heel
That timed a squeaking fiddle to a reel!
How swiftly men forget! The spawning Earth
Is fat with graves; and what is one man worth
That fiddles should be muted at his fall?
He should have died and did not — that was all.
Well, let the living jig it! He would turn
Back to the night, the spacious unconcern
Of wilderness that never played the friend.

Now came the song and fiddling to an end,
And someone laughed within. The old man winced,
Listened with bated breath, and was convinced
'Twas Jamie laughing! Once again he heard.
Joy filled a hush 'twixt heart-beats like a bird;
Then like a famished cat his lurking hate
Pounced crushingly.
He found the outer gate,
Beat on it with his shoulder, raised a cry.
No doubt 'twas deemed a fitful wind went by;
None stirred. But when he did not cease to shout,
A door creaked open and a man came out
Amid the spilling candle-glimmer, raised
The wicket in the outer gate and gazed

One moment on a face as white as death,
Because the beard was thick with frosted breath
Made mystic by the stars. Then came a gasp,
The clatter of the falling wicket's hasp,
The crunch of panic feet along the snow;
And someone stammered huskily and low:
"My God! I saw the Old Man's ghost out there!"
'Twas spoken as one speaks who feels his hair
Prickle the scalp. And then another said —
It seemed like Henry's voice — "The dead are dead:
What talk is this, Le Bon? You saw him die!
Who's there?"
Hugh strove to shout, to give the lie
To those within; but could not fetch a sound.
Just so he dreamed of lying under ground
Beside the Grand and hearing overhead
The talk of men. Or was he really dead,
And all this but a maggot in the brain?

Then suddenly the clatter of a chain
Aroused him, and he saw the portal yawn
And saw a bright rectangled patch of dawn
As through a grave's mouth — no, 'twas candlelight
Poured through the open doorway on the night;

And those were men before him, bulking black
Against the glow.
Reality flashed back;
He strode ahead and entered at the door.
A falling fiddle jangled on the floor
And left a deathly silence. On his bench
The fiddler shrank. A row of eyes, a-blench
With terror, ran about the naked hall.
And there was one who huddled by the wall
And hid his face and shivered.
For a spell
That silence clung; and then the old man:
"Well,
Is this the sort of welcome that I get?
'Twas not my time to feed the kiotes yet!
Put on the pot and stew a chunk of meat
And you shall see how much a ghost can eat!
I've journeyed far if what I hear be true!"

Now in that none might doubt the voice of
Hugh,
Nor yet the face, however it might seem
A blurred reflection in a flowing stream,
A buzz of wonder broke the trance of dread.
"Good God!" the Major gasped; "We thought
you dead!
Two men have testified they saw you die!"

"If they speak truth," Hugh answered, "then I lie
Both here and by the Grand. If I be right,
Then two lie here and shall lie from this night.
Which are they?"
Henry answered: "Yon is one."

The old man set the trigger of his gun
And gazed on Jules who cowered by the wall.
Eyes blinked, expectant of the hammer's fall;
Ears strained, anticipative of the roar.
But Hugh walked leisurely across the floor
And kicked the croucher, saying: "Come, get up
And wag your tail! I couldn't kill a pup!"
Then turning round: "I had a faithful friend;
No doubt he too was with me to the end!
Where's Jamie?"
"Started out before the snows
For Atkinson."

V

JAMIE

The Country of the Crows,
Through which the Big Horn and the Rosebud run,
Sees over mountain peaks the setting sun;
And southward from the Yellowstone flung wide,
It broadens ever to the morning side
And has the Powder on its vague frontier.
About the subtle changing of the year,
Ere even favored valleys felt the stir
Of Spring, and yet expectancy of her
Was like a pleasant rumor all repeat
Yet none may prove, the sound of horses' feet
Went eastward through the silence of that land.
For then it was there rode a little band
Of trappers out of Henry's Post, to bear
Dispatches down to Atkinson, and there
To furnish out a keelboat for the Horn.
And four went lightly, but the fifth seemed worn
As with a heavy heart; for that was he
Who should have died but did not.

Silently
He heard the careless parley of his men,
And thought of how the Spring should come
again,
That garish strumpet with her world-old lure,
To waken hope where nothing may endure,
To quicken love where loving is betrayed.
Yet now and then some dream of Jamie made
Slow music in him for a little while;
And they who rode beside him saw a smile
Glimmer upon that ruined face of gray,
As on a winter fog the groping day
Pours glory through a momentary rift.
Yet never did the gloom that bound him, lift;
He seemed as one who feeds upon his heart
And finds, despite the bitter and the smart,
A little sweetness and is glad for that.

Now up the Powder, striking for the Platte
Across the bleak divide the horsemen went;
Attained that river where its course is bent
From north to east: and spurring on apace
Along the wintry valley, reached the place
Where from the west flows in the Laramie.
Thence, fearing to encounter with the Ree,
They headed eastward through the barren land
To where, fleet-footed down a track of sand,

The Niobrara races for the morn —
A gaunt-loined runner.

Here at length was born
Upon the southern slopes the baby Spring,
A timid, fretful, ill-begotten thing,
A-suckle at the Winter's withered paps:
Not such as when announced by thunder-claps
And ringed with swords of lightning, she would ride,
The haughty victrix and the mystic bride,
Clad splendidly as never Sheba's Queen,
Before her marching multitudes of green
In many-bannered triumph! Grudging, slow,
Amid the fraying fringes of the snow
The bunch-grass sprouted; and the air was chill.
Along the northern slopes 'twas winter still,
And no root dreamed what Triumph-over-Death
Was nurtured now in some bleak Nazareth
Beyond the crest to sunward.

On they spurred
Through vacancies that waited for the bird,
And everywhere the Odic Presence dwelt.
The Southwest blew, the snow began to melt;
And when they reached the valley of the Snake,
The Niobrara's ice began to break,

And all night long and all day long it made
A sound as of a random cannonade
With rifles snarling down a skirmish line.

The geese went over. Every tree and vine
Was dotted thick with leaf-buds when they saw
The little river of Keyapaha
Grown mighty for the moment. Then they came,
One evening when all thickets were aflame
With pale green witch-fires and the windflowers blew,
To where the headlong Niobrara threw
His speed against the swoln Missouri's flank
And hurled him roaring to the further bank —
A giant staggered by a pigmy's sling.
Thence, plunging ever deeper into Spring,
Across the greening prairie east by south
They rode, and, just above the Platte's wide mouth,
Came, weary with the trail, to Atkinson.

There all the vernal wonder-work was done:
No care-free heart might find aught lacking there.
The dove's call wandered in the drowsy air;
A love-dream brooded in the lucent haze.
Priapic revellers, the shrieking jays
Held mystic worship in the secret shade.
Woodpeckers briskly plied their noisy trade

Along the tree-boles, and their scarlet hoods
Flashed flame-like in the smoky cottonwoods.
What lacked? Not sweetness in the sun-lulled
breeze;
The plum bloom murmurous with bumblebees
Was drifted deep in every draw and slough.
Not color; witcheries of gold and blue
The dandelion and the violet
Wove in the green. Might not the sad forget,
The happy here have nothing more to seek?
Lo, yonder by that pleasant little creek,
How one might loll upon the grass and fish
And build the temple of one's wildest wish
'Twixt nibbles! Surely there was quite enough
Of wizard-timber and of wonder-stuff
To rear it nobly to the blue-domed roof!

Yet there was one whose spirit stood aloof
From all this joyousness — a gray old man,
No nearer now than when the quest began
To what he sought on that long winter trail.

Aye, Jamie had been there; but when the tale
That roving trappers brought from Kiowa
Was told to him, he seemed as one who saw
A ghost, and could but stare on it, they said:
Until one day he mounted horse and fled

Into the North, a devil-ridden man.
"I've got to go and find him if I can,"
Was all he said for days before he left.

And what of Hugh? So long of love bereft,
So long sustained and driven by his hate,
A touch of ruth now made him desolate.
No longer eager to avenge the wrong,
With not enough of pity to be strong
And just enough of love to choke and sting,
A gray old hulk amid the surge of Spring
He floundered on a lee-shore of the heart.

But when the boat was ready for the start
Up the long watery stairway to the Horn,
Hugh joined the party. And the year was shorn
Of blooming girlhood as they forged amain
Into the North; the late green-mantled plain
Grew sallow; and the ruthless golden shower
Of Summer wrought in lust upon the flower
That withered in the endless martyrdom
To seed. The scarlet quickened on the plum
About the Heart's mouth when they came thereto;
Among the Mandans grapes were turning blue,
And they were purple at the Yellowstone.
A frosted scrub-oak, standing out alone
Upon a barren bluff top, gazing far
Above the crossing at the Powder's bar,

Was spattered with the blood of Summer slain.
So it was Autumn in the world again,
And all those months of toil had yielded nought
To Hugh. (How often is the seeker sought
By what he seeks — a blind, heart-breaking
game!)
For always had the answer been the same
From roving trapper and at trading post:
Aye, one who seemed to stare upon a ghost
And followed willy-nilly where it led,
Had gone that way in search of Hugh, they said —
A haggard, blue-eyed, yellow-headed chap.

And often had the old man thought, 'Mayhap
He'll be at Henry's Post and we shall meet;
And to forgive and to forget were sweet:
'Tis for its nurse that Vengeance whets the tooth!
And oh the golden time of Jamie's youth,
That it should darken for a graybeard's whim!'
So Hugh had brooded, till there came on him
The pity of a slow rain after drouth.

But at the crossing of the Rosebud's mouth
A shadow fell upon his growing dream.
A band of Henry's traders, bound down stream,
Who paused to traffic in the latest word —
Down-river news for matters seen and heard

In higher waters — had not met the lad,
Not yet encountered anyone who had.

Alas, the journey back to yesterwhiles!
How tangled are the trails! The stubborn miles,
How wearily they stretch! And if one win
The long way back in search of what has been,
Shall he find aught that is not strange and new?

Thus wrought the melancholy news in Hugh,
As he turned back with those who brought the news;
For more and more he dreaded now to lose
What doubtful seeking rendered doubly dear.
And in the time when keen winds stripped the year
He came with those to where the Poplar joins
The greater river. There Assinoboines,
Rich from the Summer's hunting, had come down
And flung along the flat their ragged town,
That traders might bring goods and winter there.

So leave the heartsick graybeard. Otherwhere
The final curtain rises on the play.
'Tis dead of Winter now. For day on day
The blizzard wind has thundered, sweeping wide
From Mississippi to the Great Divide

Out of the North beyond Saskatchewan.
Brief evening glimmers like an inverse dawn
After a long white night. The tempest dies;
The snow-haze lifts. Now let the curtain rise
Upon Milk River valley, and reveal
The stars like broken glass on frosted steel
Above the Piegan lodges, huddled deep
In snowdrifts, like a freezing flock of sheep.
A crystal weight the dread cold crushes down
And no one moves about the little town
That seems to grovel as a thing that fears.

But see! a lodge-flap swings; a squaw appears,
Hunched with the sudden cold. Her footsteps creak
Shrill in the hush. She stares upon the bleak,
White skyline for a moment, then goes in.
We follow her, push back the flap of skin,
Enter the lodge, inhale the smoke-tanged air
And blink upon the little faggot-flare
That blossoms in the center of the room.
Unsteady shadows haunt the outer gloom
Wherein the walls are guessed at. Upward, far,
The smoke-vent now and then reveals a star
As in a well. The ancient squaw, a-stoop,
Her face light-stricken, stirs a pot of soup

That simmers with a pleasant smell and sound.
A gnarled old man, cross-legged upon the ground,
Sits brooding near. He feeds the flame with sticks;
It brightens. Lo, a leaden crucifix
Upon the wall! These heathen eyes, though dim,
Have seen the white man's God and cling to Him,
Lest on the sunset trail slow feet should err.

But look again. From yonder bed of fur
Beside the wall a white man strives to rise.
He lifts his head, with yearning sightless eyes
Gropes for the light. A mass of golden hair
Falls round the face that sickness and despair
Somehow make old, albeit he is young.
His weak voice, stumbling to the mongrel tongue
Of traders, flings a question to the squaw:
"You saw no Black Robe? Tell me what you saw!"
And she, brief-spoken as her race, replies:
"Heaped snow — sharp stars — a kiote on the rise."

The blind youth huddles moaning in the furs.
The firewood spits and pops, the boiled pot purrs
And sputters. On this little isle of sound
The sea of winter silence presses round —
One feels it like a menace.

Now the crone
Dips out a cup of soup, and having blown
Upon it, takes it to the sick man there
And bids him eat. With wild, unseeing stare
He turns upon her: "Why are they so long?
I can not eat! I've done a mighty wrong;
It chokes me! Oh no, no, I must not die
Until the Black Robe comes!" His feeble cry
Sinks to a whisper. "Tell me, did they go —
Your kinsmen?"
"They went south before the snow."
"And will they tell the Black Robe?"
"They will tell."

The crackling of the faggots for a spell
Seems very loud. Again the sick man moans
And, struggling with the weakness in his bones,
Would gain his feet, but can not. "Go again,
And tell me that you see the bulks of men
Dim in the distance there."
The squaw obeys;
Returns anon to crouch beside the blaze,
Numb-fingered and a-shudder from the night.
The vacant eyes that hunger for the light
Are turned upon her: "Tell me what you saw!
Or maybe snowshoes sounded up the draw.
Quick, tell me what you saw and heard out there!"

"Heaped snow — sharp stars — big stillness everywhere."

One clutching at thin ice with numbing grip
Cries while he hopes; but when his fingers slip,
He takes the final plunge without a sound.
So sinks the youth now, hopeless. All around
The winter silence presses in; the walls
Grow vague and vanish in the gloom that crawls
Close to the failing fire.
The Piegans sleep.
Night hovers midway down the morning steep.
The sick man drowses. Nervously he starts
And listens; hears no sound except his heart's
And that weird murmur brooding stillness makes.
But stealthily upon the quiet breaks —
Vague as the coursing of the hearer's blood —
A muffled, rhythmic beating, thud on thud,
That, growing nearer, deepens to a crunch.
So, hungry for the distance, snowshoes munch
The crusted leagues of Winter, stride by stride.
A camp-dog barks; the hollow world outside
Brims with the running howl of many curs.

Now wide-awake, half risen in the furs,
The youth can hear low voices and the creak
Of snowshoes near the lodge. His thin, wild shriek

Startles the old folk from their slumberings:
"He comes! The Black Robe!"
Now the door-flap swings,
And briefly one who splutters Piegan, bars
The way, then enters. Now the patch of stars
Is darkened with a greater bulk that bends
Beneath the lintel. "Peace be with you, friends!
And peace with him herein who suffers pain!"
So speaks the second comer of the twain —
A white man by his voice. And he who lies
Beside the wall, with empty, groping eyes
Turned to the speaker: "There can be no peace
For me, good Father, till this gnawing cease —
The gnawing of a great wrong I have done."

The big man leans above the youth: "My son —"
(Grown husky with the word, the deep voice breaks,
And for a little spell the whole man shakes
As with the clinging cold) "— have faith and hope!
'Tis often nearest dawn when most we grope.
Does not the Good Book say, Who seek shall find?"

"But, Father, I am broken now and blind,
And I have sought, and I have lost the way."
To which the stranger: "What would Jesus say?

Hark! In the silence of the heart 'tis said —
By their own weakness are the feeble sped;
The humblest feet are surest for the goal;
The blind shall see the City of the Soul.
Lay down your burden at His feet to-night."

Now while the fire, replenished, bathes in light
The young face scrawled with suffering and care,
Flinging ironic glories on the hair
And glinting on dull eyes that once flashed blue,
The sick one tells the story of old Hugh
To him whose face, averted from the glow,
Still lurks in gloom. The winds of battle blow
Once more along the steep. Again one sees
The rescue from the fury of the Rees,
The graybeard's fondness for the gay lad; then
The westward march with Major Henry's men
With all that happened there upon the Grand.

"And so we hit the trail of Henry's band,"
The youth continues; "for we feared to die:
And dread of shame was ready with the lie
We carried to our comrades. Hugh was dead
And buried there beside the Grand, we said.
Could any doubt that what we said was true?
They even praised our courage! But I knew!
The nights were hell because I heard his cries
And saw the crows a-pecking at his eyes,

The kiotes tearing at him. O my God!
I tried and tried to think him under sod;
But every time I slept it was the same.
And then one night — I lay awake — he came!
I say he came — I know I hadn't slept!
Amid a light like rainy dawn, he crept
Out of the dark upon his hands and knees.
The wound he got that day among the Rees
Was like red fire. A snarl of bloody hair
Hung round the eyes that had a pleading stare,
And down the ruined face and gory beard
Big tear-drops rolled. He went as he appeared,
Trailing a fog of light that died away.
And I grew old before I saw the day.
O Father, I had paid too much for breath!
The Devil traffics in the fear of death,
And may God pity anyone who buys
What I have bought with treachery and lies —
This rat-like gnawing in my breast!

"I knew
I couldn't rest until I buried Hugh;
And so I told the Major I would go
To Atkinson with letters, ere the snow
Had choked the trails. Jules wouldn't come
along;
He didn't seem to realize the wrong;

He called me foolish, couldn't understand.
I rode alone — not south, but to the Grand.
Daylong my horse beat thunder from the sod,
Accusing me; and all my prayers to God
Seemed flung in vain at bolted gates of brass.
And in the night the wind among the grass
Hissed endlessly the story of my shame.

"I do not know how long I rode: I came
Upon the Grand at last, and found the place,
And it was empty. Not a sign or trace
Was left to show what end had come to Hugh.
And oh that grave! It gaped upon the blue,
A death-wound pleading dumbly for the slain.
I filled it up and fled across the plain,
And somehow came to Atkinson at last.
And there I heard the living Hugh had passed
Along the river northward in the Fall!
O Father, he had found the strength to crawl
That long, heart-breaking distance back to life,
Though Jules had taken blanket, steel and knife,
And I, his trusted comrade, had his gun!

"They said I'd better stay at Atkinson,
Because old Hugh was surely hunting me,
White-hot to kill. I did not want to flee
Or hide from him. I even wished to die,
If so this aching cancer of a lie

Might be torn out forever. So I went,
As eager as the homesick homeward bent,
In search of him and peace.
But I was cursed..
For even when his stolen rifle burst
And spewed upon me this eternal night,
I might not die as any other might;
But God so willed that friendly Piegans came
To spare me yet a little unto shame.
O Father, is there any hope for me?"

"Great hope indeed, my son!" so huskily
The other answers. "I recall a case
Like yours — no matter what the time and place —
'Twas somewhat like the story that you tell;
Each seeking and each sought, and both in hell;
But in the tale I mind, they met at last."

The youth sits up, white-faced and breathing fast:
"They met, you say? What happened? Quick! Oh quick!"

"The old man found the dear lad blind and sick
And both forgave — 'twas easy to forgive —
For oh we have so short a time to live —"

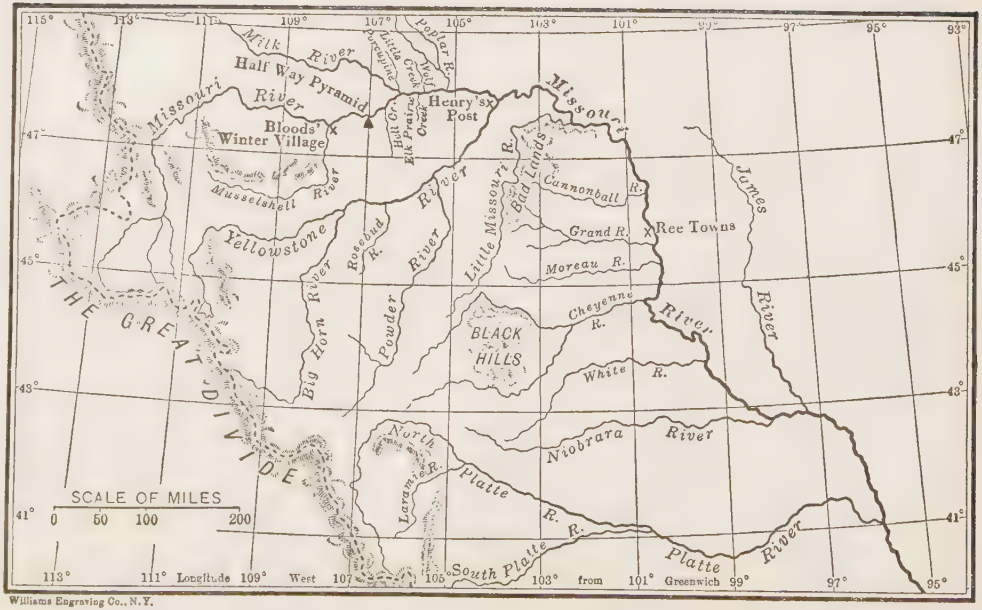
Whereat the youth: "Who's here? The Black
Robe's gone!
Whose voice is this?"

The gray of winter dawn
Now creeping round the door-flap, lights the
place
And shows thin fingers groping for a face
Deep-scarred and hoary with the frost of years
Whereover runs a new springtide of tears.

"O Jamie, Jamie, Jamie — I am Hugh!
There was no Black Robe yonder — Will I do?"

NOTES

By Julius T. House, Ph.D. (Chicago)
Head of the Department of English at New River State College,
Montgomery, W. Va.



Williams Engraving Co., N.Y.

NOTES TO THE SONG OF THREE FRIENDS

PAGE 1

Ashley, William Henry, born in Virginia, 1778, removed to St. Louis 1808, elected lieutenant governor of Missouri 1820.

1. A rhetorical question.
2. Why is "Time" capitalized?
3. "pinchbeck," insignificant.
8. What stories of wealth were told of Peru by early explorers?
9. "distant springs," headwaters of the Missouri River.
10. What is a siren? Unknown things are always alluring.
11. What songs did the sea winds sing before the earth had been fully explored?
12. When was the earth "flat"? "black ships," made of unpainted timber and weather-beaten. "steep," the sea gives the impression to one on the shore of being higher than the land.
14. "They were young." The adventurer is always young in spirit; often, in years.

Poetry affords excellent opportunity for the study of diction. A specific word is more forceful than a general term. Study the following specific terms: scrawl, flocked, bloomed, and note how vivid they are compared with such words as: writing, came, were, which might have served as prose substitutes.
Define roster.

PAGE 2

1–4. Explain this figure.
5. Most of the company were young men.

6. Explain "lips unroughed."
8–10. The past always seems more free and romantic than the present.
9. "hoarded tales," kept as a precious treasure. Such are all heroic stories.
12. What "great wind"?
21. "wind of wonder"; note the alliteration. Notice the effect of the contrast of the dreams of wealth and the "shabby sails." Is the picture the more effective?
25. Locate the Yellowstone.

Define: albeit, immemorial, tithe, mackinaw, gunwales.

PAGE 3

3. What "moony haven"? Why "moony"?
5. Why "comrades of Jason"?
6. Why "timeless"?
7. What "Fleece"?
12. To any one familiar with western history, every stream, every river, every mountain peak, every mountain gorge recalls the names of pioneer explorers.
20–23. A forecast of disaster.

Define: rune, rendezvous, pore, blear, incantatory, hinter.

PAGE 4

Major Andrew Henry, an associate of Ashley's and commander of the expedition of 1822.

3. What time of the year?
5. "smoke-thin greenery," because the leaves were yet small.

Define: buzzling, lilting, chansonettes, gangplanks.

PAGE 5

4. "rainy April," tears.
7. "youngling," a diminutive ending.
8. "Danger"; adventure is dear to the heart of the hero.
9. Danger is a vixen, the more charming because difficult to conquer.
11. Woman's part in history has been that of sorrow for her father, lover, son, killed in war or adventure.
14. "cordelles," towlines.

The keelboat had three means of locomotion: sails, oars, and cordelles. It could carry from forty to sixty tons and was towed by fifteen to twenty-five men.
Define: gauderies, gauche, ditty.

PAGE 6

4. "gray-green smudge," an exact description.
5. Why "kindling"?

Locate each river named on this page.
Define: sorcery, unleashed.

PAGE 7

1. A true statement; courage and joy go together.
5-17. Groups of men at rest always tell stories. Such a situation is the source of the folk tales of primitive people which is a beginning of literature. The legends out of which Homer's epics developed were preserved by oral tradition for five hundred years or more before the birth of the poet.
8. The "lie" is an artistic addition to the facts.
11. A figure from the treatment of flax.
18. From this point to line 9 on the next page is a lyric description. It is suggested that it be memorized.

21. Why "manless"? Note appeal to sense of smell in "waves of odor."

Define: looped, spinner, vie, veracity, crescendo, buffet, mordant.

PAGE 8

6. Why "wear thin"?
7. The light of early dawn is like a stare.
10. "of thunder and of sun," storm and heat, squally weather.
11. "river shrank," what season of the year?
15. "leathered," so tanned as to look like leather.
16–17. The appearance of seeing afar is characteristic of those accustomed to view wide spaces.

Define: sable, cowl, blare, lank, gnarled.

PAGE 9

1. The men "loitered," not the days — a form of metonymy whereby a word is attached to one nearly associated to the exact word to which it would usually be attached.
4. Locate the Great Divide. Why so named?
7. "River of the West," the Columbia. Locate it.
10. Locate the Great Falls.
19. The sports of men in camp are told in Vergil and Homer.

Define: peltry, opulent, tipple, euchre.

PAGE 10

3. The "thread" of life. Clotho, one of the three Fates that spin the thread.
9. The second forecast of tragedy.

Of what descent was each of the comrades?

24. What was the "logic"?

PAGE 11

2. Why were Mike's jokes "always funny"?

9. Note how much description is in this line. Note how the specific term "towered" illumines the whole.

16. Note Carpenter's smile. It has a part in the later development of the story.

17. "to mock," by contrast.

23–24. Note the swift strokes by which the reader sees the blond hair and blue eyes.

Define: lumbering, quip, repartee, porching, mien, card.

PAGE 12

6. "plenilunar," like the full moon.

8–12. Mike's nose, jaw, and stubborn cheekbones form a contrast to the jolly face, and the author reconciles the contradiction by the statement that jest and fight are "shifting phases" of his joy in living. Easy good nature and pugnacity, even cruelty, are often found in the same person.

16–17. Mike's gift of song plays a part in the story.

19. Rabelaisian story, one that is broad and funny, so named from Rabelais, the great French humorist.

23. "goat-hoofed," the faun was half human but with the feet of a goat; therefore, jolly but without the spiritual qualities of humanity.

24. "pantagruelizing," from Pantagruel, a joking, cynical character created by Rabelais.

Define: jocund, wight.

PAGE 13

3. "easy way," the way of self-indulgence, like Shakespeare's "primrose path."
14. "Adamic dream," God's dream of a perfect man.
16. It is suggested that the student memorize the description of Fink.

Note how the author revels in physical prowess and beauty in men.

17. "creative thrill," the beginnings of womanhood.
18–19. Note how material beauty suggests beauty of harmonious sound.
22. Why speak of a tree as "soaring"?

PAGE 14

1. "homeward," what home?
4. "symbols leading back to God," manifestations of His thought.
8. Draw a word picture of Mike.
13. "mother mud," the Earth.
22. Michelangelo, an Italian sculptor and painter.

PAGE 15

10–11. Like the "Adamic dream," God trying for a perfect physical specimen. Nature experiments a great deal.
16. Explain "planetary pride in lunar adoration."

PAGE 16

Would Mike have liked Talbeau had the latter won the fight? Which of the three comrades do you most admire? Whom would you trust most?

PAGE 17

The custom of shooting the cup is authentic.

PAGE 18

14. "men made laughterless," a third suggestion of coming disaster.

15. "Ilion," Troy.

16. "sixfold winding sheet." Schliemann, a German archeologist, found the site of Troy on which nine cities had been built one on top of another, the sixth from the top being Homeric Troy.

Define: winding sheet, carouse.

PAGE 19

Note how vivid is the description of a commonplace incident, the breaking of camp.

18–5 (on next page) is a true picture of a prairie in July.

19. Note the effect of struggle in the word "toiling"; how weak a substitute would be the word "going"!

22. During long drouths on the plains, the hot dawns come colorless.

Define: whimsy, undertow, shaggy, rabble.

PAGE 20

2. The sound of the grasshopper makes the silence more oppressive.

6–12. The journey of a month is told in six lines by the changes of the moon. These lines should be memorized.

Locate the streams.
Define bellied.

PAGE 21

This page gives a clear description of many places on the Missouri and other western streams. Could this description be as effective in prose?

See the author's theory of epic composition, "John G. Neihardt — Man and Poet," pages 80–82.

19. "shoal and bar," shallow water and sand bars.

20. "ravelled," straggling.

24. From this point to line 2 on the following page, we are given true description of the appearance of objects in a semi-desert atmosphere.

PAGE 22

12. "gather wool," colloquial phrase expressing a stupid state of mind.

Define: lucent, gaudy, gears.

PAGE 23

4. Why "pantomime"?

5. "with ungirded loins," not equipped for battle.

9. Why "futile"?

16–19. Explain and note effectiveness of the lines.

17. "Styx," a river in the underworld of the Greeks.

Define: pellmell, fusillade, inane, rabid.

PAGE 24

13. The lazy horseguards, being dead, have the rest they desired.

17. The graves were black outlines on a gray prairie.

Write or give orally an outline of the entire incident of the loss of the herd.

Define silhouettes.

PAGE 25

The serious mood induced by the death of their comrades soon passes. It is the nature of youth to rejoice and forget.

10. Why are these days "golden"?

11. What are the "broad pieces"? The days are those of youth, which are likened to "broad-pieces," that is, coins.

PAGE 26

In the western country, there comes, usually about the middle of August or a little later, an abrupt change in the season. This break comes after a succession of dry, hot days such as the poet has been picturing. Suddenly in the afternoon the temperature drops 20 or 30 degrees, clouds roll up from the northwest, a cold wind without rain sweeps down, and summer is dead.

Define: taut, spar, bodeful, wraith, flaw.

PAGE 27

4. "Greening," a winter apple.

14–15. The mourning of the wolves and the fog-flecked river deepen the lonely, homesick feeling.

Memorize lines 1–16, a lyric.

18. The Missouri, at their junction, is smaller than the Yellowstone.

PAGE 28

The building of the fort again illustrates the economy of verse under a master's strokes in making factual statement.

6. Why "homing time"?

Remnants of the fort are yet found.

Define: cacophonic, bastions.

PAGE 29

Locate the Musselshell.

7. "crane-winged news." The Indians signaled news across the prairies with marvelous swiftness.

8. "Long Knives," Indian name for white men, because of the swords carried by army officers.
17. The writer of these notes has seen grass that high in swampy places on the prairies.
19. Animals live all winter by eating the winter-cured grass.

The speech is true to the spirit of the Indians. See "John G. Neihardt — Man and Poet," pages 78–80, for the author's acquaintance with Indians.

PAGE 32

4–15. Indian summer.
7. Why "reminiscent"?
17. Locate the Poplar.
22. Wolf Creek was dry at this time. Many water courses are found in the west containing water only in seasons of rain or melting snow.

Define: hallucination, smudge, cabalistic.

PAGE 33

2. Locate these streams.
3. Locate the Milk, the country of the Assiniboines, the Blackfeet, the Crows, the Bloods.
20. A description of the aurora often seen in northern latitudes. All the large manifestations of nature on the plains appear in Neihardt's poetry. The blizzard is in "The Song of Hugh Glass," and the locust swarm darkens the sky in "The Song of the Indian Wars." A prairie fire, such as the poet saw during his boyhood in western Kansas, is reproduced later in this poem. The aurora here pictured was seen by the poet at the mouth of the Musselshell in 1908.

24. "Polaris," the pole star.
25. "Ursine Isles," the stars in the constellation of Ursa Major, of which the "Dipper" is a part.

Define: yammer, comber, hurtle.

PAGE 34

6. Locate the Half Way Pyramid.
8. Lifeless, like the hills of the moon.
9. The home of the Yotuns, or giants of the Scandinavian mythology.

PAGE 35

18. "bois de vache," the droppings of the buffalo, meaning "cow-wood." Westerners changed the expression to "cow-chips."

PAGE 36

8. "mockeries of flame," the "sun dogs."
10. "caching," hiding.
14. A twilight picture in one line.
15. "Beyond the frozen vast," giving one the sense of wide spaces.
17. "white" from frost on the beard.

PAGE 37

23. "boudin," strips of fat lying along the intestines.

PAGE 38

1. "Gargantua," a character created by Rabelais, was a great eater.
6. Again the forecast of disaster. Sorrow is keener coming after merriment.

PAGE 39

12. "Red Hair," Lewis of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. How old was the girl?
14. Every woman is the most beautiful woman in the world to her lover.
18. Love may be either domestic or destructive.
19. "timeless town," Troy; timeless because it lives forever in song and story.

PAGE 40

The first woman referred to is Helen of Troy; the second, Iphigenia, daughter of Agamemnon, leader of the Greeks against Troy, who was offered as a sacrifice by him to the winds when the expedition set out; the third, Iseult, Irish princess, wife of Mark and mistress of Tristram in the Arthurian legend.

8. "one face in truth," the one face is that of Woman, and it appears to each man when he loves.
10. What "Tree"?
11. What "fruitage"?
12. Why "God's afterthought"?
19. "Ariadne," daughter of King Minos of Crete, who fell in love with Theseus and was deserted by him.

Define blowsy.

PAGE 41

1–6. Events have their way with us, and fate follows inscrutable laws.
16. The successful man is esteemed to have hidden wisdom.
18. "medicine," mysterious power like witchcraft.

Define: reticence, ruck, inscrutably.

PAGE 42

9. "a mountain's sunny flank," the protection of the chief.
22. To appreciate the fun, it must be realized that an Indian feast is a sacred ceremony and hence his comrades must keep straight faces while Fink jokes, using the English that the Indians do not understand.

PAGE 43

Enter the girl, and Fink jokes no more.

PAGE 44

7. "alplike years," the years since youth. Note that Fink's songs are of love, home, etc., indicating a deeper feeling than is usual with him.
21–22. A custom among all primitive peoples.

Define chinook.

PAGE 45

17. How vividly the poet sees things!

Define coruscating.

PAGE 46

11–15. Note how Carpenter's power is brought out by contrast: the trappers "trudge"; Carpenter "strides"; he "dwarfs" the pony that pants to keep the pace.
16. What made him look like a god?
17. "Hercynian woods," an ancient haunt of the Goths.

Here the girl sees Carpenter.

PAGE 47

4. Clio is the muse of history. Little of real history is ever told.
11. The girl hears no tumult. Why?

17. The bloom of love, fatal because of what follows.
18. Explain this line.
20. The girl woos Carpenter, though he has not asked for her; an unusual proceeding, but she is a spoiled child, perhaps having the temperament of her adventurous sire.

PAGE 48

Note the prayer to the Sun. If the girl utters a false word, she is doomed. Is not the whole rite beautiful?

19. Another hint of disaster, with Fink as its agent.

PAGE 50

4. A hole in the top of the tepee is the egress for smoke. This is protected from the winds by a flap fastened by a movable pole; thus a sudden change in the wind drives the smoke down into the tepee.
7. The tales of great storms are among the favorite themes of winter conversation among white pioneer settlers of the west as well as among Indians. The past is always romantic and inspires the art of the storyteller.
17. "marginalia," the comment of the scholiast on the margin of a manuscript.

PAGE 51

6. "ghosts" are a common part of the life of all primitive peoples. The Indians often see the wraiths of their ancestors.
20. "when calves were black." Calves born in early winter are darker than those later in the spring.

PAGE 53

5–10. Note the comparison of Talbeau's joke, by which he approached his theme, to the trial shot of a starving hunter whose life depends on his marksmanship.

11–12. Two lines packed with meaning.

Explain.

19–20. Talbeau's deep love for and loyalty to both his comrades begin now to make him the beautiful and tragic figure of the tale. See "John G. Neihardt — Man and Poet," pages 112 and 124–125.

PAGE 55

3–13. "so spoke Talbeau," etc. Fink's silence is emphasized by the sounds, but there is in Fink's face a faint response to the amusing memories.

16–19. What thought comes to Fink? Is it a forecast? Does Talbeau understand?

"crouchant," like a tiger about to spring.

PAGE 56

5. Talbeau hopes that when the men leave the village and the girl, all will be forgotten. If only he had left it at that!

The past six pages have given the reader the feeling of a tempestuous January in the far north. The following pages give an equally vivid sense of February.

22. The prairie questions through the wolves whether spring is coming.

PAGE 57

4. "heaped-up winter," snows. "billow green." Grass in spring seems to wave in the wind like billows of the sea.

10. "spearlength high," the apparent height of the sun above the horizon.

13–16. The wind breathes and sobs, and the prairie dreams. Does not nature seem human under the poet's touch?

19. Again the moon is fragile and flees from the storm.

Define: gauze, tenuous.

PAGE 59

2. "imminence of bloom," its nearness.

4. "credulous," foolishly expectant.

9. Explain the line.

Define: purled, palpitant.

PAGE 60

Leisure brings memories and good feeling.

9. "Flap," a part of the tent that was fastened and could be opened.

11–13. Another forecast. There are no sadder memories than those of bygone joys.

PAGE 61

11–13. Fink desired to win from Carpenter; previously he had not cared.

16–19. Accident, Chance, the Joker, upsets the most careful plans, and so Fate wins the game.

PAGE 62

8. Who is the "Weird One"?

PAGE 63

5–6. Dogs do throw bulls by catching them on the snout.

22. Carpenter had been knocked out.

The last line and the first three on page 65 are reminiscent of the description of the "Adamic dream" concerning Fink, p. 13.

PAGES 68–69

The fine spirit of Carpenter is here displayed. He is the true sportsman. What of Fink? Is he capable of worse conduct?

PAGE 70

2–3. The goose and crane are likened to John the Baptist, for they foretell the coming of the rain, which is, in a very true sense, the saviour of the world.

6. "monochrome," the sky and boughs being in one hue.

1–10. A sketch of landscape and weather in March.

14. "Green," untanned.

15–9 (on next page). The conversation is joyous with anticipation.

PAGE 71

13–20. The story will be told hereafter, like other heroic tales.

15. When a matter becomes art, it is old in that it belongs to the ages, and, being true to human nature, it is permanent.

Define garrulous.

PAGE 72

What lines again forecast disaster?

PAGE 73

Select four lines that reveal the confusion due to mingling of the dream and the reality.

24. What was the "low thunder"?

PAGES 74–75

A fine lyric of the breaking of the ice. Cf. "The River and I," Chapter I.

PAGE 76

Exit the girl. Note how little you know of her. Why is not more told?

PAGE 77

The story of the trip down the river to Fort Henry in no way repeats that of the earlier journey. The difference is due to the difference in season and in the mood of the men.

13–15. Why "tears upon a tomb"?

18. Note the unique expression "half way to noon"; space presented to the time sense.

PAGE 78

Does "Fink's guffaw" make you hope for reconciliation? Have you ever had the emotion expressed in the last sentence?

PAGE 79

The latter part of this page and the first of the next give a unique bit of description. The sense of being motionless at the center of all things while all else moves is wonderful. This and many other such passages are descriptions of Neihardt's own experiences.

PAGE 82

Why, when asked to sing something lively, does Mike sing a sad song? Does Mike make an approach to reconciliation? What is Carpenter's mistake?

The crisis of the tale is passed on this page. With what lines?

23. What thread "was spun"?

PAGE 83

Does Mike seek a quarrel?

PAGE 84

[What forecast again?
Is Mike planning to kill Carpenter?
Why does Carpenter speak as he does to Talbeau?
Why does Talbeau have such confidence in Fink?

PAGE 85

3. What double meaning is there in Carpenter's comment?

Why does Carpenter consent to the shooting?

16. Why does Fink set his gun down after raising it?
17–18. These are the actual words of Fink according to witnesses of the scene.
19. Where before has Carpenter been compared to a cedar? Observe this last vivid picture of him.

PAGE 86

"The mating peewees" and the impending end of Carpenter bring together the twin mysteries of birth and death. The flute-like songs are the happy chorus to the tragedy. In the Greek tragedy, the chorus often chanted in a mood opposite to that of the actor.

9. Again Fink's words are quoted as actually spoken.
10. The catbird's harsh scream is the chorus, proclaiming the bitter fact as opposite to Fink's joke.

PAGE 88

Do the men suspect that Fink intended to kill?

PAGE 89

Is Fink a good actor? Answer from all the facts.

20–21. Explain this unique figure.

PAGE 90

In Ashley's party was the hero of another epic by Neihardt, "The Song of Hugh Glass."

PAGE 91

11–14. Recalling the events after the late tragedy, men would easily believe that Carpenter's ghost was the "third rider." The title of this section is a stroke of genius. The echoes might sound ghostly.

21. "Fate," there is more tragedy to follow.

PAGE 92

5. An eminent American critic has pointed out these lines as an illustration of Neihardt's unique powers in description.

Why do the men talk so little?

19. Why does Fink joke?

23. What is the effect of the laughter of the prairie owl?

PAGE 93

2. Why does not Talbeau hear?

8–9. Why does the cold seem greater to Fink?

12–21. Both men would see the ghost, for the thought of Carpenter was always present to each.

PAGE 96

The description of the prairie fire is true to facts. Older settlers of the region can recall such fires, which often swept the prairies for hundreds of miles, carrying death to the wild life in their path.

19. "transient realms of form," the period since the solar system took form is but a moment in comparison with the period of preceding chaos.

PAGE 97

2. Sudden uprushes of flame.

6. The flames were like flowers.

10. "Anemones and violets of hell," patches of grass far in advance of the main body of the fire are lighted by flying bodies of burning grass carried by the wind.

PAGE 98

11. "The deadliest of all earth's preying things," man by his cunning is more destructive than any other creature and more relentless.

12. Explain this line.

17–18. Note the differing character of the horses. Cf. "John G. Neihardt — Man and Poet," page 126.

PAGE 99

Note the different appeal of Carpenter's smile to the two men. Cf. "John G. Neihardt — Man and Poet," pages 125–126.

PAGE 100

5–7. Early Cenozoic age, before the ice age.

16. "will to live," the fundamental impulse of all life.

18–21. Note the superior courage of the buckskin.

PAGE 101

20–21. Do you believe Talbeau will desert Fink?

24. Talbeau's love of Fink ("dear yesterdays") urged him to stop his horse; his love of life urged in the opposite direction ("fought wildly for the spurs").

PAGE 102

12. It is Satan who says, "All that a man hath will he give for his life."

PAGE 104

4–16. A remarkable passage.

Define: runnel, panorama, draw.

PAGE 107

3–4. "lunar land," the moon has no atmosphere and hence no vegetation. Great distances through the Badlands possess very little vegetation.

2–7. The Badlands of the Little Missouri. Locate them on the map.

13–17. Explain this striking figure. The mare was true to her character. Horses have personality.

PAGE 108

5. "both grew mellow," slightly intoxicated.

13–18. What made Fink admit the murder? Vanity?

PAGE 109

Does Talbeau still love Fink? What lines seem to prove that he does?

PAGE 110

One's desires often come true in dreams.

21. Note how the finding of the gun and the message of Carpenter seem to reveal an arrangement of Providence. Perhaps men often so deceive themselves.

PAGE 111

Show from lines on this page that Talbeau did not seek Fink's death. What was his purpose?

PAGES 112–113

Fink does not show his usual courage in this incident. Explain why.

PAGE 114

What adds to Fink's fear?

23–5 (on next page). Fink also finds a supernatural connection in events.

PAGE 115

10. "swooping of the dark," death.

21. The echoes of his own footsteps.

PAGE 116

1–13. A remarkable description of the Badlands and their unlovely vegetation. Note the succession of ugly plants: the prickly pear crawls, the soap weed is evil-minded by reason of thirst and thrusts out barbed stilettos in sheer anger to the sky that gives no rain, and the oak, which should tower, is a crooked dwarf and squats in its own shadow, as it were, in a bog.

24–26. Talbeau's rifle shot. Talbeau will not permit Fink to rest.

PAGE 117

11. "Weird witnesses," the echoes of his footsteps.
18. What "gruesome silence"?

PAGE 118

8–11. One of the most remarkable ghost scenes in literature.
15. "Argus-eyed," Argus, son of Zeus and Niobe, had an hundred eyes.
21. It is difficult to keep a given direction in the deeper Badlands because one must follow the twisting gullies among the buttes.

PAGE 119

Which ghost scene is more appealing?
Fink's sin has found him out.

PAGE 120

9–18. Mike is an actor and insincere.

PAGE 121

17–18. His need makes him sincere.
20. The drink of friendship, loyalty.

PAGE 122

Exit Fink.

1–5. Convinced that Talbeau means that he shall perish, Fink seeks only to escape.

PAGE 123

Talbeau sees his mistake. "Judge not that ye be not judged." "Vengeance is mine!"

PAGE 125

11. Talbeau is so nearly exhausted that he does not realize that he has come upon the trail of a man crawling.

PAGE 126

3–6. "A sentry crow," etc. Do you know "what feast is interrupted there"?

14–19. A climax in five lines.

Why does the story cease here?
Who is the hero of the tale? Why?
Upon whom was vengeance wrought? By whom?
Cf. "John G. Neihardt — Man and Poet," page 123.

MAP SHOWING THE ROUTE OF HUGH GLASS IN HIS SEARCH FOR JAMIE. THE "FIRST TRAIL," RUNNING NORTHWARD FROM FORT KIOWA, TRACES THE HERO'S WANDERINGS UP TO HIS ARRIVAL AT FORT ATKINSON (PAGE 112). THE "SECOND TRAIL" INDICATES HUGH'S JOURNEY FROM THAT POINT TO HIS MEETING WITH THE BOY AMONG THE PIEGANS. FORT ATKINSON WAS SITUATED ON THE WEST BANK OF THE MISSOURI RIVER SIXTEEN MILES UPSTREAM FROM WHERE OMAHA NOW STANDS.

NOTES TO THE SONG OF HUGH GLASS

Graybeard and Goldhair

Before beginning the poem carefully read the Introduction.

PAGE 129

In the study of this poem it is necessary to learn the geography and topography of the country. Define "topography." Tell about Leavenworth Campaign; Major Henry.

The story of Hugh Glass is historical and may be found in the following works: Chittenden's History of the American Fur Trade, New York, 1902; Sage's Scenes in the Rocky Mountains, Boston, 1857; Ruxton's Adventures in Mexico, London, 1847; Howe's Historical Collections of the Great West, Cincinnati, 1857; Cooke's Scenes and Adventures in the U. S. Army, Philadelphia, 1857; The Missouri Intelligencer for June 18, 1825. Accounts of the death of Hugh Glass, in 1832, are given in The Life and Adventures of James P. Beckwourth, London, 1892, and in Maximilian's Travels, London, 1843.

2. 'Twas when the guns that blustered at the Ree

Ree — Aricara or Rickaree Indians. Locate them in 1823. Where are they now?

3. Had ceased to brag, and ten score martial clowns

Why "clowns"? See Introduction.

6. A withering blast the arid South still blew,

What is "South"? Why capitalized? Did Homer and Vergil personify the winds?

9. Southward before the Great White Hunter's face:

Who is the Great White Hunter? What is the time of year?

13. With eighty trappers up the dwindling Grand,

Why "dwindling"?

14. Bound through the weird, unfriending barren-land

"Unfriending" whom?

15. For where the Big Horn meets the Yellowstone;

Locate the junction of the streams.

PAGE 130

1. Deep-chested, that his great heart might have play,

Describe Hugh Glass. Hugh's physical characteristics are drawn in large lines. Compare this with the more elaborate descriptions of persons in other books. Which is more effective?

2. Gray-bearded, gray of eye and crowned with gray

Our author's descriptions leave much room for the play of the reader's imagination. Is this method effective with you?

4. And, for the grudging habit of his tongue,

"For" — by reason of.

8. And hate in him was like a still, white hell,

Why "white"?

9. A thing of doom not lightly reconciled.

What does "reconciled" modify? What is this figure called?

14. Old Hugh stared long upon the pictured blaze,

What were the pictures Hugh saw in the blaze? Would you like to know more of Hugh's past? Why does not the author tell us more concerning it?

17. The veil was rent, and briefly men discerned

What "veil"?

19. Beneath the still gray smoldering of him.

What figure in "still gray smoldering"? Was Hugh a good fighter? A man whose anger was to be feared?

PAGE 131

2. So, tardily, outflowered the wild blond strain
   Whence the "wild blond strain"?

4. A Ganymedes haunted by a Goth
   Who was Ganymedes? The Goths?

5. When the restive ghost was laid,
   What was the "restive ghost"? How old was Jamie?

17. When Ashley stormed a bluff town of the Ree,
   Who was Ashley? See Introduction.

20. Yet, hardly courage, but blind rage agrope
   What is courage?

23. Tore off the gray mask, and the heart shone through.
   What was the "gray mask"?

24. For, halting in a dry, flood-guttered draw,
   Define "draw" as here used. How does it differ from "ravine"? from "gully"?

PAGE 132

24. As though spring-fire should waken out of snow.
   Explain the figure.

PAGE 133

4. So with their sons are women brought to bed,
   Of whom is Hugh thinking when he uses these words?

13. Nor could these know what mocking ghost of Spring
   Express in other words the idea contained in "mocking ghost of Spring."

16. So might a dawn-struck digit of the moon
   Explain the figure and interpret it in terms of Hugh's feelings for Jamie.

18. And ache through all its craters to be green.

What is the present condition of the surface of the moon?

21. Pang dwelling in a puckered cicatrice

Define "cicatrice." Explain the figure.

23. Yet very precious was the hurt thereof,
24. Grievous to bear, too dear to cast away.

These lines constitute a paradox. Define "paradox." Explain the meaning of the lines. Can pain be "precious"?

PAGE 134

What lines in this page forecast an approaching disaster? Can you recall such forecasts in other pieces of literature?

10. A phantom April over melting snow,

Why "phantom" April?

11. Deep in the North some new white wrath is brewed.

Express the meaning of this line in other language. How does it apply to the story?

16. Tales jaggèd with the bleak unstudied word,

Was the language of Hugh's stories polished? Effective? Are men natural story tellers? Answer from your own experience. What does the life of primitive man tell us with regard to the matter?

17. Stark saga-stuff.

Define "saga." What is meant by the words: "stark saga-stuff"?

19. A mere pelt merchant, as it seemed to him;

Define: pelt, epic, whist. Is "Hugh Glass" epic in material and form?

PAGE 135

Which of these men loves the other more? In case of severe trial will each be true to the other? Is either likely to be vengeful? unforgiving? fickle?

3. That myth that somehow had to be the truth,

What is "that myth"? What feeling is expressed in "had to be the truth"?

4. Yet could not be convincing any more.

Why could it not "be convincing any more"?

17. And so with merry jest the old man went;

Note in the passage the second forecast of disaster.

PAGE 136

9. The dusty progress of the cavalcade
10. The journey of a snail flock to the moon;

What feeling in Jamie is made clear in this figure?

11. Until the shadow-weaving afternoon

Explain the figure "shadow-weaving afternoon," etc.

17. Hoofbeats of ghostly steeds on every hill,
18. Mysterious, muffled hoofs on every bluff!
19. Spurred echo horses clattering up the rough, etc.

Explain "hoofbeats of ghostly steeds," "muffled hoofs," "echo horses."

21. The lagging air droned like the drowsy word

Why "drowsy" word? The transfer of an epithet is called a "trope," from a Greek word meaning *to turn*.

PAGE 137

1. Lean galloper in a wind of splendid deeds,

Note the vivid imagery and the effect of the broken meter.

4. The horse stopped short — then Jamie was aware, etc.

What gives the effect of loneliness in these lines?

Note the effect of vast stretches of space in the use of the names of heavenly bodies to denote the points of the compass. A sense of the infinity of space arises often in the reader of this poem. Any imaginative person feels this sense ever deepening upon him on looking long at the prairies.

11. Save for a welter of cawing crows,

What is the effect of the cawing of the crows in the general stillness?

Note that the meter is intentionally changed. What effect?

13. One faint star, set above the fading blush, etc.

What is the effect of the mention of the star and its growing from faint to clear?

16. For answer, the horse neighed.

What is the effect of the neighing of the horse?

17. Some vague mistrust now made him half afraid, etc.

Mistrust of what? Is disaster near?

PAGE 138

1. "Somewhere about the forks as like as not;
2. And there'll be hunks of fresh meat steaming hot,
3. And fighting stories by a dying fire!"

Why does Jamie talk to himself?

4. The sunset reared a luminous phantom spire
5. That, crumbling, sifted ashes down the sky.

What is the effect of these two lines?

8. And in the vast denial of the hush
9. The champing of the snaffled horse seemed loud.

What is the effect of these two lines? What is the "vast denial"? Why mention "the champing of the horse"? Pages 9 and 10

are used to induce in the reader a sense of extreme loneliness. Where is the climax? What devices have been employed for the purpose?

17. The laggard air was like a voice that sang,

Why is the air now as a voice that sings rather than drowsy and weird?

18. And Jamie half believed he sniffed the tang
19. Of woodsmoke and the smell of flesh a-roast;

These lines indicate the lad's eagerness.

PAGE 139

2. And in the whirlwind of a moment there, etc.

Could Jamie perceive so much in so brief a time under such circumstances? Does the picture in "huddled, broken thing" seem realistic?

11. A landscape stares with every circumstance etc.

Jamie's experience in the preceding lines is here explained. Did you ever notice how plainly things stand out in a flare of lightning?

14. Then before his eyes, etc.

Is this consistent with the part of Jamie in the fight with the Rees?

22. Heard the brush crash etc.

Onomatopœia. Define "rubble."

PAGE 140

1. A swift thought swept the mind of Jamie clear, etc.

Is the change in Jamie from anger to coolness good psychology? Why?

8. Swerved sharply streamward. Sliddering in the sand,

Note onomatopœia. How did Jamie elude the bear?

17. Like some vague shape of fury in a dream,

Why did the sight of the bear seem thus to Jamie?

PAGE 141

4. Would think of such a "trick of getting game"!

For a moment Jamie feels as if Hugh were still living and he can now triumph in his skill. Was that natural in a boy?

6. Like a dull blade thrust back into a wound.

Memory of sorrow "like a dull blade," etc. Is that true to life?

10. Like some familiar face gone strange at last.

Meaning of "gone strange at last"?

In this and the next three pages note the sincerity and the boyishness of Jamie's affection and grief. It is necessary to understand Jamie now that the reader may interpret his later conduct. Define: eld, blear.

PAGE 142

6. Had wiped the pictured features from a slate! etc.

Note two powerful similes in these lines. Do they convey adequately the horror of the spectator? This "ruined face" of Hugh's has much place in the remainder of the story. The lines are not pleasant to read, but life is not always pleasant. Homer and Shakespeare often wrote lines that shock by their naked truth.

15. Still painted upon black that alien stare

Why "alien stare"?

16. To make the lad more terribly alone.

Why "more terribly alone"?

21. Pale vagrants from the legendry of death

Pale vagrants, *i.e.* ghosts.
Define: funereal, alien, legendry, potential.

PAGE 145

6. For, though the graybeard fought with sobbing breath, etc.

A wrestling match in which death has a "strangling grip" on Hugh. Note the vividness of physical imagery, "neck veins like a purple thong tangled with knots." What biblical allusion in "break upon the hip"?

11. There where the trail forked outward far and dim;

What "trail forked outward"?

13. His moan went treble like a song of pain,

Does the voice become like a shrill song under such circumstances?

20. For dying is a game of solitaire, etc.

A grim epigram.
Define: treble, solitaire.

PAGE 146

The rest of this division of the poem develops the catastrophe of cowardice and treachery. The elements of it are (1) Jamie's youthfulness and unsettled character, (2) Le Bon's ability to play upon his weakness, (3) the actual nearness of the Rees, (4) the apparently hopeless condition of Hugh prolonged over several days.

12. That mercenary motives prompted him.

Do you believe the protestations of Jules that mercenary motives do not prompt him? Does he "protest too much"?

16. The Rickarees were scattered to the West:

Why mention the Indians so early?

19. Three days a southwest wind may blow

A southwest wind on the plains is always warm, and seldom carries rain.
Explain the application.

PAGE 147

Why does Jules talk always as though the death of Hugh were certain?

10. Unnumbered tales accordant with the case,

Do you think Le Bon knew these tales?

18. A bear's hug — ugh!' And often Jamie winced etc.

What was the effect on Jamie?
Define: dialectic, colophon.

PAGE 148

8. So summoning a mood etc.

How do Le Bon's stories change as night comes on? Is his psychology effective? Note the increase in the fears of Jamie.

11. Of men outnumbered: and, like him of old, etc.

"Him of old" — Æneas in Æneid, Book II.

23. Gray-souled, he wakened to a dawn of gray,

"Gray-souled" — meaning? "A poet is known by his epithets."
Define: lugubriously, garrulous.

PAGE 149

1. And felt that something strong had gone away,

What strong thing had gone away?

5. Jules, snug and snoring in his blanket there, etc.

Is it natural that the conscious living Jules should seem more real to the boy than his unconscious friend?

6. Just so, pain etc.

Note the epigram. Is it a true one?

14. But grappled with the angel.

Jacob in Genesis.

18. Many men May tower, etc.

Would such a statement be peculiarly true of a boy like Jamie? Recall his conduct in the Ree fight.

24. Nor might a fire be lit,

Note the shrewdness of Jules in failing to light a fire.

PAGE 150

What shows that Jamie is at the breaking point?

4. And with it lulled the fight, as on a field, etc.

The crisis of the disease.

9. It would soon be o'er, etc.

Jules talks in sentimental vein. Sentimental people are very often cruel.

17. To dig a hole that might conceal a man;

Would Jamie have resented the digging of a grave four days earlier?

Jules easily weeps. So do many insincere people.

Define: beleagured, mutability, immemorial, funerary.

PAGES 151–153

The last stage of Jamie's breakdown.

Had you any doubt that Jules would beget panic in Jamie? How much do you blame Jamie? Why did Le Bon take Hugh's gun, blanket, and knife?

The Awakening

PAGE 154

Note that the last line of the first division of the poem rhymes with the first line of the second division. Have you noticed that many times the rhyming lines close one paragraph and open the next? The effect

of this device is to keep the mind of the reader in strain for what is to follow.

What is a couplet? Is the poem written in couplets? How is the cæsura handled in this poem? Compare with Pope's method in "Essay on Man."

3. But some globose immensity of blue

Note epithets in this line. How comprehensive!

7. So one late plunged into the lethal sleep, etc.

The sensation of the awakening is likened to the possible experience of one in death. The author is much interested in such matters.

Define "lethal." What literary associations with this word?

12. The quiet steep-arched splendor of the day.

At what time of day did Hugh awake?

PAGE 155

2. But when he would obey, the hollow skies etc.

Note the suddenness of the loss of consciousness as expressed in the metaphor: "the hollow skies," etc.

5. Remote unto his horizontal gaze

6. He saw the world's end kindle to a blaze etc.

At what time did Hugh re-awaken?

What is the effect upon the reader of the expression "world's end" rather than "east"?

9. Dawn found the darkling reaches of his mind, etc.

A figure from archæology. Explain.

13. Men school the dream to build the past anew

What part of speech is "school"?

17. Wherein men talked as ghosts above a grave.

This is the second suggestion that Hugh was vaguely conscious of what happened before his awakening.

Define: shards, torsos, rubble, sag.

PAGE 156

5. Sickened with torture he lay huddled there.

Note the vividness of such words as, "sickened," "torture," "huddled," which appeal both to muscular sense and to sight.

7. Proportioned to the might that felt the chain.

Explain.

10. That vacancy about him like a wall, etc.

The power of that which yields and yet restrains suggests the sense of helplessness that came to Hugh. This feeling is often brought out in the later portions of the poem.

20. Grimly amused, he raised his head, etc.

What was the effect of "the empty distance" and "the twitter of a lonely bird" on Hugh? Why question whether there was something wrong?
Define: collusive, bleak.

PAGE 157

On this and the following page we have the stages by which Hugh learns that he has been deserted. Note the steps: (1) Major Henry is prompt, (2) many hoof prints of horses, (3) the grave known for a grave by its shape, (4) ash heap and litter of a camp, (5) the trail.

8. Of course the horse had bolted

That is, run away.

17. A grave — a grave, etc.

Does Hugh really wonder if he has been dead and has arisen? For the third time it is stated that Hugh heard the talk of his comrades while he was prostrate from the bear's attack.

25. Suspicion, like a little smoky lamp etc.

Note simile. Is it effective?

PAGE 158

1. That daubs the murk but cannot fathom it,

Hugh's suspicions are vague as yet.

6. The smoky glow flared wildly,

What "smoky glow"?

10. A gloom-devouring ecstasy of flame,

11. A dazing conflagration of belief!

Suspicion passes to certainty. Explain the whole figure from the beginning.

12. Plunged deeper than the seats of hate and grief, etc.

Does nature sometimes seem to mock our moods? The older literatures seem unconscious of this psychology. Note Bryant's "Death of the Flowers."

Define: daub, grotesque, ecstasy, apathetic, complacence, connivance.

PAGE 159

2. His manifest betrayal by a friend

Why does the desertion of Jamie make that of others seem nothing?

13. Yet not as they for whom tears fall like dew etc.

Hugh's tears are not shallow; they indicate a lasting sorrow. Those who weep easily, easily forget.

18. He lay, a gray old ruin of a man, etc.

Both physically and emotionally, a remarkable metaphor.

20. And then at length, as from the long ago, etc.

His suffering makes the time of friendship seem long ago. A song may be both sweet and sad, as may also love.

25. . . . as in a foggy night

32 1. The witchery of semilunar light, etc.

A fine comparison of the spiritual to the material.

Define: zany, retrospective.

PAGE 160

6. As under snow the dæmon of the Spring.

"Dæmon," spirit.

8. Nor might treachery recall, etc.

He had been loved, nothing could change that; he could go on loving and nothing could change that either. This is the high note in devotion. "If ye love them that love you, what thank have ye?"

16. Upon the vessel of a hope so great, etc.

The lover is only the vessel of the great passion.

21. Now, as before, collusive sky and plain etc.

Sky and plain have conspired to take Hugh's life, so it seems to him. They represent distance that yields but still is unconquered. This idea haunts the "Crawl."

PAGE 161

1. For, after all, what thing do men desire, etc.

Food and shelter are necessary to any life; all values rest upon them. This idea is fundamental in modern thinking.

20. Jamie was a thief!

Why Jamie more than others?
Define "gage."

PAGE 162

5. And through his veins regenerating fire etc.

Anger made him strong, while grief made him weak. Is that not true to nature?

7. Now once again he scanned the yellow plain, etc.

Hugh projects his subjective condition on nature. This idea occurs often in the poem. Is it a true conception?

14. Alas for those who fondly place above, etc.

A continuation of the philosophy found on page 32. Love is the supreme thing, not the person who is loved. The way is itself the goal.

19. A bitter-sweet narcotic to the will, etc.

Note how Hugh's hate arouses his energies. For his purposes it is stronger than love.

Define: bellowsed, regenerating, lethargy, conspirant, merging vulnerable, narcotic.

PAGE 163

11. Leaning to the spring, etc.

The final horror, his face, fixes Hugh's hate to a steady, burning purpose, seeming equal to his task.

PAGE 164

5. That waste to be surmounted as a wall,

6. Sky-rims and yet more sky-rims steep to climb —

In gazing across a vast space to the horizon, one seems to be looking uphill. This is especially noticeable on the ocean.

7. That simulacrum of enduring Time —

One traveling long distances by his own power, and having no means of measurement, conceives space not in miles, but in duration of effort.

8. The hundred empty miles 'twixt him and where

Why "empty" miles?

11. One hairsbreadth farther from the earth and sky

He was as remote from all things as it was possible to be, so why not try!

Define "simulacrum."

The Crawl

PAGE 165

The Crawl is the most detailed account of physical suffering and endurance extant in poetry. Note the large number of words that make direct appeal to the sensations of thirst, weariness, chronic pain, fever, delirium. Again the sense of loneliness, of betrayal, of a conspiracy to destroy him appears everywhere in Hugh's experience. The monotony of the journey appears in its slowness, which is indicated in many ways.

Before describing the Crawl, Neihardt first found out what vegetable growths would be found on the trail, the character of the soil, how the streams would erode, etc. The poet is true to all nature, even natural science.

3. And through it ran the short trail to the goal.

What was the "goal"? Ree villages lay nearly directly east.

4. Thereon a grim turnpikeman waited toll:

Who is the "grim turnpikeman"?

7. Should make their foe the haunter of a tale.

Hugh was killed on the Yellowstone by the Rees in 1832.

9. The scoriac region of a hell burned black

The bad lands of the Little Missouri, so made to appear by spontaneous combustion of lignite deposits.

13. Should bid for pity at the Big Horn's mouth.

Locate the Big Horn's mouth, where Henry and his men spent the winter of 1823–1824.

PAGE 166

2. Whereon the feeders of the Moreau head —

Head waters of the Moreau. Locate the Moreau.

3. Scarce more than deep-carved runes of vernal rain.

The rune was a character in the ancient alphabet and ultimately came to stand for poetry. Here the original meaning as a deep cut is restored.

6. Defiant clumps of thirst embittered grass, etc.

Note how exactly the characteristics of an arid landscape are set forth in such phrases as "thirst embittered grass," "parched earth," "bared and fang-like roots," "dwarf thickets," "stunted fruits." The poet is shown by exactness, not inaccuracy.

15. And made the scabrous gulch appear to shake

The very sound of the word "scabrous" suggests dryness.

20. And where the mottled shadow dripped as ink etc.

The shadow of leaves on the yellow earth is black. The description is absolutely accurate. "A poet is known by his epithets."

PAGE 167

3. Amid ironic heavens in the West —

Why "ironic heavens"?

6. A purpling panorama swept away.

Why "purpling"?

7. Scarce farther than a shout might carry

How far had Hugh traveled in the day?

16. Into the quiet house of no false friend.

What "quiet house"?

17–20. Alas for those who seek a journey's end — etc.

The philosophy of these lines is that the way is the important thing, not the end. This is a part of Neihardt's life-philosophy.

21. Now swoopingly the world of dream broke through

Note that no two of Hugh's dreams are alike. In this dream his revenge is futile. Is that the nature of revenge, to defeat itself? How many lines are taken to tell this dream? How much in little space!

PAGE 168

1. Gazing far, etc.

Another remarkable description of the sky and prairie and their effect upon Hugh.

Make a list of epithets descriptive of both sky and prairie as you find them on pages 26–27–28–29–30–32–34–36–39. Epithets may be adjectives or verbs or nouns. Such are "globose immensity," "smoky steep," "serene antagonist," "negativity of might."

9. Seemed that vast negativity of might; etc.

In what sense is the might of distance negative?

What was the "frustrate vision of the night"?

What does the poet mean by saying it came "moonwise"?

What is Hugh's mood when he feels that the foe is "naught but yielding air"?

13. A vacancy to fill with his intent!

What is the grammatical construction of "to fill"?

15. Three-footed; and the vision goaded him.

What vision "goaded him"?

24. Served but to brew more venom for his hate,

Why is hate spoken of as venomous? What has modern Physiology to say of this?

25. And nerved him to avail the most with least.

What is meant by "avail the most with least"?

PAGE 169

10. Devoured the chance-flung manna of the plains

"Manna" — what is the reference?

18. The coulee deepened; yellow walls flung high, etc.

Accurate description of arid conditions by their effect on Hugh.

PAGE 170

6. It had the acrid tang of broken trust
7. The sweetish, tepid taste of feigning love!

A projection of the subjective into the objective.

14. Clear as a friend's heart, 'twas, and seeming cool —

The same as above.

22. And lo, the tang of that wide insolence
23. Of sky and plain was acrid in the draught!

Note again the attitude of nature, as Hugh sees it, in its "wide insolence."

25. How like fine sentiment the mirrored sky etc.

The cruelty of sentimentalism. Note on this page the steps by which the sense of thirst is induced in the reader and the corresponding disappointment increased; "dry as strewn bones bleaching to a desert sky," "grateful ooze," "sucked the mud," "sweetish, tepid taste," "taunted thirst," "damp spots," then the description of the pool and the "famished horses." Is not the reader as thirsty as Hugh and nearly as keenly disappointed?

PAGE 171

8. Nor did he rise till, vague with stellar light, etc.

Compare with Bryant's "Forest Hymn."
At what line does Hugh fall asleep? At what line does he begin to awake? How many days since "The Crawl" began?

17. And Hugh lay gazing till the whole resolved etc.

What is the difference between this dream and that of the previous night? Why? Does Hugh still love Jamie? Would he kill him in such a mood? How many lines in the dream?
Define: specious, gulch, buttressing, Host, nave, architrave.

PAGE 172

Hugh has not yet reached the prairie on the divide between the Grand and the Moreau, though he has journeyed two days. How far do you think he has crawled?

3. Loath to go, Hugh lay beside the pool and pondered fate, etc.

Why is Hugh less eager to renew his journey than on the previous morning? Do you suppose his dream had anything to do with the matter? His weariness?

11. Sustaining wrath returning with the toil.

Why does wrath return?

23. Of strength that had so very much to buy.

What had his strength "to buy"?
Define: efface, cauldron.

PAGE 173

11. Sleep out the glare. With groping hands for sight,

Hugh sleeps on the afternoon of the third day of his journey. Explain "groping hands for sight."

14. Or sensed — the dusky mystery of plain.

Why dusky mystery? Can you see a prairie by starlight?

15. Gazing aloft, he found the capsized Wain

"Capsized Wain," the Dipper. What time of night?

16–17. Thereto he set his back;

What direction did he take? How much knowledge of the constellations must have meant to primitive men! To sailors! To hunters! Read Bryant's "Hymn to the North Star."

19. The star-blanched summit of a lonely butte

20. And thitherward he dragged his heavy limb.

Note the butte used to guide the crawler. Could a plainsman see a butte by starlight? Could a "tenderfoot"?

21. It seemed naught moved. etc.

The movement on a prairie and in the night seems objectless. It gives a supreme sense of monotony. Time stopped. We measure time by events; no events, no time.
Define: blanched, incipient.

PAGE 174

4. Sheer deep upon unfathomable deep, etc.

A curious but vivid figure, expressing a sense of darkness and uninterrupted silence.

8. So lapsed the drowsy æon of the night —

The monotony makes the hours seem a moment drawn out.

10. And then, as quickened to somnambulance, etc.

Note the steps of the dawning, and the suddenness of the coming of day. The description is not only vivid but accurate.

20. Scarce had he munched the hoarded roots, when came etc.

Why the difference between this and previous dreams?
Define "tensile."

PAGE 175

8. It was the hour when cattle straggle home etc.

A fine lyric. This is one of many memory pictures of Hugh's travels. Nothing in the poem tells directly of Hugh's past. This silence suggests tragedy dimly illumined by the memory pictures. Is Hugh an imaginative man? Enumerate the evening sounds. Note the steps marking the transition from evening to night. How many days has Hugh crawled? Hugh is known to have been a Pennsylvanian of Scotch descent.
Define "peripheries."

PAGE 176

1. Blank as the face of fate. In listless mood etc.

Fate is associated with the inevitable and unrevealed. "In listless mood" etc. — the end of a day of feverish dreams finds Hugh weakened and caring less to live.

3. And met the night. The new moon, low and far, etc

Note the phase of the moon.

7. The kiote voiced the universal lack.

Hunger.

8. As from a nether fire, the plain gave back
9. The swelter of the noon-glare to the gloom.

The heat of the prairie is often very noticeable after sunset.

12. Why seek some further nowhere on the plain?

What "nowhere"?

14. So spoke some loose-lipped spirit of despair;

Why "loose-lipped"?

15. And still Hugh moved, volitionless — a weight, etc.

Volitionless — The power of habit is compared to that of the moon over the tides.

18. Now when the night wore on in middle swoon,
21. To breathe became an act of conscious will.
22. The starry waste was ominously still.
24. As through a tunnel in the atmosphere —

Note the steps of the coming storm: *middle swoon*, a drowsy night, stifling condition of the air, utter silence with sense of impending disaster, *as through a tunnel*, etc.

The description of the storm is exact to the minutest detail. It is not interspersed with more or less sentimental comments as is Byron's description of the storm on the Alps (Childe Harold, Canto III), yet it gains in power by its adherence to truth.

PAGE 177

4. An oily film seemed spread upon the sky

Storm still approaching. "The oily film," the gradual darkening of the atmosphere.

9. Upon hell's burlesque sabbath for the lost,

What could be more hopeless than "Sabbath in Hell"?

12. Hugh chose not, yet he crawled;

Habit keeps him moving.

13. He felt the futile strife was nearly o'er.

Hugh will die unless relief comes.

14. And as he went, a muffled rumbling grew,

Far away thunder, the next step in the approach of the storm.

16. Somehow 'twas coextensive with his thirst,

Confusion of objective and subjective, a not uncommon experience of extreme weakness.

PAGE 178

12. Star-hungry, ranged in regular array, etc.

Note the use of constellations to indicate the vast expanse and swift movement of the cloud; another illustration of the poet's power to see things in the large. Locate the constellations named. Explain the figure, "star-hungry."

19. Deep in the further murk sheet-lightning flared.

Sheet-lightning — covering the sky like a sheet, sometimes called heat lightning — a common phenomenon in prairie storms.

24. What turmoil now? Lo, ragged columns hurled, etc.

Explain "ragged columns."

PAGE 179

2. Along the solid rear a dull boom runs!

Explain "solid rear."

11. Reveals the butte-top tall and lonely there
12. Like some gray prophet contemplating doom.

The second time the butte has been described.

16. Ghosts of the ancient forest — or old rain, etc.

Geology tells us that these plains were once covered with forests.

19. That e'er evolving, ne'er resolving sound
20. Gropes in the stifling hollow of the night.

Never fully developing. "Evolving," "resolving" — technical expressions in music.

PAGE 180

The rush of the rain, the constant flare of lightning, the sudden cessation, as well as the slow and dread beginning, are characteristic of storms in semi-arid countries. This poem reveals every phase of nature on the prairies and none more vividly than the storm.

Define: hurtling, wassail, sardonic, flaw, ravin, murk, cosmic, sodden.

PAGE 181

3. The butte soared, like a soul serene and white
4. Because of the katharsis of the night.

The butte appears again, this time as the symbol of a soul that has struggled and triumphed. The principle of Katharsis, purification, is a principle of the Greek drama as worked out by Aristotle. To what degree is it a principle of life?

5. All day Hugh fought with sleep and struggled on

Which day? Why does Hugh no longer travel at night?

16. Hope flared in Hugh, until the memory came
17. Of him who robbed a sleeping friend and fled.

Explain.

18. Then hate and hunger merged; etc.

Note again that Hugh finds Jamie's treachery everywhere. It is an obsession with him.
Define "amethyst."

PAGE 182

How many days has Hugh crawled? How far has he journeyed

5. Swooped by. The dream of crawling and the act etc.

An appeal to the muscular sense.
Such dreams bespeak extreme weariness.

8. The butte, outstripped at eventide, now seemed etc.

The butte now becomes the measure of a progress infinitely slow, a source of discouragement.

13. Whose hand-in-pocket saunter kept the pace.

Why "hand-in-pocket"?

16. What rest and plenty on the other side!

Hugh must have encouragement. The break in the prairie, the crest of the divide, furnishes that. Explain the psychology. How far is the divide from the Grand?

20. All day it seemed that distant Pisgah Height

Why "Pisgah"?
Define "lush."

PAGE 183

Hugh is near to starvation. The adventure with the gopher goes from waking reality to dream on the following night and to waking dream the next day, revealing how sick Hugh had become.

10. The battered gray face leered etc.

Note that the vivid picture of the face of Hugh is secured by the choice of a few meaningful words, battered, leered, slaver, anticipating jaws.

13. Evolving twilight hovered to a pause

The twilight pause means what?

18. Hugh jerked the yarn. It broke.

Note the brevity of the climax, "It broke."

19. Down swooped the night,

How many days of journeying? The dream is a nightmare while the previous one was relatively peaceful. Why the difference?

PAGE 184

3. Woke hordes of laughers down the giddy yawn

What "hordes of laughers"?

5. Dream dawn, dream-noon, dream-twilight!

Night and day are "telescoped" for Hugh by the monotony of crawling either awake or in dreams and never getting anywhere.

17. Dream-dawn, dream-noon, dream-night! And still obsessed

Why the repetition?

18. By that one dream more clamorous than the rest,

What is the one dream? Why is it a dream?
Define: gully, turbid, relict.

PAGE 185

3. Yet had the pleasant lie befriended him,
4. And now the brutal fact had come to stare.

What was the "pleasant lie"? The brutal fact?

7. And nursed that deadly adder of the soul,
8. Self-pity. Let the crows swoop down and feed, etc.

Sentimentalism is soul-flabbiness.

15. And lo, a finger-nail, etc.

The accumulation of great results by infinitesimal accretions is one of the everlasting surprises in life.

21. So fare the wise on Pisgah.

How do the wise use their Pisgahs? To enjoy or to inspire to further effort?

Define: facture, dwarfed, Titan, triumvirate.

PAGE 186

2. Some higher Hugh observed the baser part.

What was the higher, what the baser part?

3. So sits the artist throned above his art, etc.

The hurt is nothing, the achievement is all. No man who is worth anything but counts his work as more than all else.

5. It seemed the wrinkled hills pressed in to stare, etc.

The manifestations of nature become Hugh's audience and he falls into the throes of composition. Most of our thinking is in words uttered to persons present, absent, or imagined.

11. So wrought the old evangel of high daring, etc.

The true philosophy of life, to be a "victor in the moment."

23. That day the wild geese flew

What is the effect of their cries? Describe the appearance of the sky.

Define: recks, travail, evangel.

PAGE 187

Present, past and fancy are all mingled in Hugh's experiences this day, showing his weakened condition, and the feeling for Jamie obsesses him.

9. Hate slept that day,

Was it hate or an inversion of love?

18. At last the buzzard beak no longer tore

What "buzzard beak"?

Define: lethargy, maudlin.

PAGE 188

4. And now serenely beautiful etc.

These lines were suggested to the author by a picture, "The Death of Absalom."

6. Thus vexed with doleful whims the crawler went etc.

Hugh would have died at this time had he not drifted into the rugged vale.

11. Told how the gray-winged gale blew out the day.

Why "gray-winged"?

20. It seemed no wind had ever come that way,
21. Nor sound dwelt there, nor echo found the place.

How is utter quiet expressed!

PAGE 189

7. Returning hunger bade him rise; in vain
8. He struggled with a fine-spun mesh of pain etc.

An appeal to muscular sense.

16. In that hip-wound he had for Jamie's sake

That "hip-wound" brings back the desire for revenge, a close association of ideas. Have you had such experiences?

19. Was turned again with every puckering twinge.

"Puckering twinge," another appeal to muscular sense.

20. Far down the vale a narrow winding fringe etc.

Having passed the divide Hugh slept at the head of a valley that farther down becomes the bed of a little creek flowing into the Moreau.

Define: mesh, trammelled, puckering, betokened.

PAGE 190

6. These two, as comrades, struggled south together —

Contrast the two "comrades," each journeying to the many fathomed peace, one consumed with "lust to kill," the other singing on the way. A bit of wise philosophy is suggested.

9. And one went crooning of the moon-wooed vast;

What is the "moon-wooed vast" and to what is it compared?

PAGE 191

12. All streams ran thin; and when he pressed a hand etc.

Why did he do this?

20. Far-spread, shade-dimpled in the level glow,

Another of many sunset pictures in the poem and no two are alike. "Far-spread, shade-dimpled in the level glow," a prairie sunset in one line.

24. Hugh saw what seemed the tempest of a dream

Why a "dream" tempest?
Define: phasic, weather-breeding.

PAGE 192

3. A dust cloud deepened down the dwindling river;

4. Upon the distant tree-tops ran a shiver etc.

Note the pictures suggested in "dust cloud deepened," "upon the distant tree-tops ran a shiver," "huddle thickets writhed," "green gloom gapes," "mill and wrangle in a turbid flow."

13. Bound for the winter pastures of the Platte!

The Platte was an especially fine bison country.

17. The lopped moon weltered in the dust-bleared East.

How long since Hugh began his journey?

18. Sleep came and gave a Barmecidal feast.

In the Arabian Nights one of the Barmecides, a wealthy family,

served a beggar a pretended feast on beautiful dishes that were empty.

19. About a merry flame were simmering etc.

The appeal to the sense of hunger is powerful. Compare Vergil, Æneid, Book I, 210–215.

21. And tender tongues that never tasted snow,

Why "never tasted snow"?

PAGE 193

2. So sounds a freshet when the banks are full etc.

Note comparison of the movement of the herd to a swollen river clogged by débris.

8. Through which the wolves in doleful tenson tossed

Tenson: among the troubadours a contest between two singers.

9. From hill to hill the ancient hunger-song.

Hunger is the oldest form of suffering, and prayer for food the oldest prayer.

15. With some gray beast that fought with icy fang.

Why "icy" fang? "white world"?
Define: eerie, myriads.

PAGE 194

8. The herd would pass and vanish in the night

How long was the herd in passing?

During this time, and for fifty years thereafter, bison herds often covered the plains as far as the eye could see. In the 60's travellers on the old Oregon trail often journeyed through one solid herd for as much as three days, and on either side the prairie was filled to the horizon.

23. So might a child assail the crowding sea!

The comparison of the on-rushing herd to high sea tide, notable in itself, is greatly strengthened by the comparison of Hugh to a child assaulting the waters. Note the impulse of the defeated to act in absurd ways. Note the epithet, "crowding."

PAGE 195

2. Slept till the white of morning o'er the hill

3. Was like a whisper groping in a hush.

The comparison of light to sound, "the white of morning like a whisper," is unusual but true.

4. The stream's low trill seemed loud.

Why seemed the low trill loud?

9. Smacked of the autumn, and a heavy dew etc.

What association of sensations brings the picture of the autumn fields?

Note how quickly the vision passed, an illustration of the author's power of concentration. Hugh was born in Pennsylvania. What was his father's business? How do you know from this and other passages? See the lyrical passage on page 47.

15. He brooded on the mockeries of Chance,

On page 58 we saw Hugh in the act of literary composition; now we see him a philosopher. This is a common fact among what we call the "common" people. Note the grave-digger scene in Hamlet, Act V.

Define: smacked, hoar, frore.

PAGE 196

1. Revealed the havoc of the living flood, etc.

Point out each word and statement that pictures the havoc wrought in the valley by the herd.

9. A food-devouring plethora of food

Devouring what food? What plethora?

10. Had come to make a starving solitude!

What idea is modified by the word "starving"?

16. That still the weak might perish.

Express this idea in other terms. Note unusual use of the word "still." State the biological "law of evolution."

24. Within himself the oldest cause of war

What is the "oldest cause of war"? The newest?
Define: plethora, raucous, guerdon.

PAGE 197

8. He saw a bison carcass black with crows, etc.

This picture is unique, cruel, almost revolting, but wonderfully true.

18. To die contending with a living foe,
19. Than fight the yielding distance and the lack.

To engage in a short struggle with a visible foe with a definite end near and certain is far easier than to endure the long drawn and indefinite. This is because man is primarily well equipped for the immediate struggle of hunting and war, but is not gifted by nature with power to endure.

PAGE 198

5. The wolf's a coward, who, in goodly packs, etc.

The wolf pack symbolizes the mob. The law of mob life is cruelty, and cruelty is always cowardly.

10. How some great beast that shambled like a bear

Why "shambled like a bear"?

24. Woe in the silken meshes of the friend,

25. Weal in the might and menace of the foe.

The friend often weakens his friend. The opposition of the enemy develops his strength.
Define: lacerated, vituperative, prodigious, frenzy, weal.

PAGE 199

14. When sleep is weirdest and a moment's flight,

Dreams often come just before waking.

20. Hoof-smitten leagues consuming in a dust.

What is the syntax of "leagues"? Explain the line.

23. A corpse, yet heard the muffled parleying etc.

Note how the idea that he was really dead haunts Hugh both sleeping and waking. Find other places in the poem where this is true.

PAGE 200

3. The babble flattened to a blur of gray —

A comparison of sound to light.

15. Could they be the Sioux?

The Sioux had been allies in the Leavenworth Campaign, while the Rees were enemies. Note page 1.
Note on this page the vivid picture of the Indians riding in the fog.

24. The outflung feelers of a tribe a-stir

Meaning of "feelers"?

PAGE 201

8. And wasna!

Bison meat, shredded, dried, and mixed with bison tallow and dried bullberries, the mixture being packed in bladders.

11. But kinsman of the blood of daring men.

Actual "blood brotherhood" between Indian and White was not uncommon and bravery and loyalty were the basis of such relation.

13. O Friend-Betrayer at the Big Horn's mouth, etc.

Note how Hugh's imagination rushes on to the killing of Jamie.

17. From where a cloud of startled blackbirds rose

What startles the blackbirds?

Note on this page, and the next, various hints of the coming of the Indians and how important the matter was to the starving watcher from the bluff.

20. Embroiled the parliament of feathered shrews?

What are the "feathered shrews"?

22. Flackering strepent; now a sooty shower, etc.

"Flackering strepent" — fluttering and noisy, a fitting description of the startled flock; onomatopœia.

The entire picture of the blackbirds is notable. They are a "boiling cloud," "a sooty shower," with big flakes and driven by a squall, they are "cold black fire." All these terms are startling but exact.

Define: parfleche, panniers, maize, parliament, shrews.

PAGE 202

4. What augury in ornisc̆opic words

5. Did yon swart sibyls on the morning scrawl?

A rhetorical question to indicate the dread interest Hugh felt in the question "Sioux or Ree?"

Note the fancy that words are written on the sky.

13. In their van

14. Aloof and lonely rode a gnarled old man etc.

"Gnarled" like a tree. A most vivid picture of Elk Tongue, a famous Ree chief.

16. Beneath his heavy years, yet haughtily
17. He wore them like the purple of a king.

His great age is like a royal robe. "Gray hairs are a crown of glory."

18. Keen for a goal, as from the driving string etc.

In how many and significant ways his face is described in these lines: keen for a goal, like a flinty arrow-head, with a brooding stare. Directions for a statue could scarcely be more exact or more full of suggestion.

Define: ruck, augury, orniscopic, swart, sibyl, attenuated, gnarled, piebald.

PAGE 203

Read the entire description of the Indians at one sitting and get the unified effect.

12. Such foeman as no warrior ever slew.

Hunger.

18. And hurled them shivering back upon the beast.

According to the Greek myth men were little better than beasts until Prometheus brought fire to them from heaven in a reed. How nearly does the myth accord with truth?

21. Hope fed them with a dream of buffalo etc.

With primitive man feast and famine were often close together.

23. Home with their Pawnee cousins on the Platte,

Locate the Platte. The Rees and Pawnees speak the same tongue with slight variations.

Define "ravelled."

PAGE 204

2. The rich-in-ponies rode, etc.

The first scene in the moving picture shows the contrast of rich and poor that existed even in the most primitive society.

3. For much is light and little is a load etc.

What is meant? The sentence is a paradox.

10. Whining because the milk they got was thinned etc.

The squaws with their crying babies are the material of the second scene, followed by the striplings.

14. How fair life is beyond the beckoning blue, etc.

"Distance lends enchantment."

15. Cold-eyed the grandsires plodded, for they knew, etc.

Note contrasting words: striplings, grandsires; strutted, plodded. One group saw visions, the other was disillusioned.

17. In what lone land.

What is meant?

20. Stooped to the fancied burden of the race;

What is the "burden of the race"?

25. The lean cayuses toiled.

Cayuse, a broncho, originally one bred by the Cayuse Indians.

27. To see a world flow by on either side,

How does the world "flow by"?

PAGE 205

The dog was an ever present feature of Indian life. Note the author's familiarity with the dog.

12. Yielded to the squaws'

13. Inverted mercy and a slow-won grave.

"The female of the species is more deadly than the male." Why? For the sake of the protection of the young. Indian fighters had a special horror of falling into the hands of the squaws. Hate and love are opposite sides of the same shield. In proportion as woman loves her children and the protectors of them she hates anybody and anything that menaces them.

14. Since Earth's first mother scolded from a cave

A true picture of social origins.

17. To match the deadly venom brewed above
18. The lean, blue, blinding heart-fires of her love.

Note the witches' cauldron that bubbles here and the fire that burns below it.

20. But thrice three seasons yet should swell the past, etc.

Glass was killed by the Rees in 1832.

21. So was it writ, ere Fate's keen harriers etc.

Why is Fate capitalized?
Define: palimpsest, harriers.

PAGE 206

3. For that weird pass whereto the fleet are slow,

The fleet are the young, but the old reach the "weird pass" first.

16. Scarce had he crossed the open flat, and won etc.

On this page and the next we have the temptation of Hugh to kill the squaw. (*a*) Do you feel that Hugh will kill her? (*b*) Would he be justified in so doing? (*c*) Would you be satisfied to have the hero of the story slay a weak old woman, though an Indian? Whom does Hugh see sitting haloed like a saint? (page 79) What impression on Hugh does the whole adventure make?

PAGE 208

3. He reached a river. Leaning to a pool etc.

Was the reaction against his own pity natural?

14. That somehow some sly Jamie of a dream
15. Had plundered him again;

Again the obsession concerning Jamie. There seems a suggestion of insanity in this. Is the pursuit of vengeance always insane?

18. Now when the eve in many-shaded grays etc.

Another prairie sunset. Note that every description of the prairie is woven directly into the story. No two are alike.

21. Hugh paused perplexed. Elusive, haunting, dim, etc.

A comparison of pure sense to pure idea is unusual but true, for ideas rest upon sense perception.
Define: crone, fleered.

PAGE 209

4. It seemed the sweet
5. Allure of home.

Association by sense of smell — smoke, fire, home in the evening.

12. Hearth-lit within, its windows were as eyes etc.

The comparison of an old farmhouse to an old mother. Point out pathos in each.

21. A two-tongued herald wooing hope and fear,

Meaning? Compare Æneid, Book I, 661.
Select a lyric from this page.
Define: troll, recrudescent.

PAGE 210

2. And reached a bluff's top. In a smudge of red etc.

Another sunset picture. Where were the "pools of gloom"? How comes the "mottled" effect?

10. He lay upon the bare height, fagged, forlorn,

Hugh is again near to collapse.

17. Then with a start etc.

How well the first stage of the finding and appropriation of fire has been pictured as the effect of smell! Now comes the second stage. The whole incident epitomizes in wonderful way the

meaning of fire to mankind. Note the beauty of the comparison of the flame to a lily.
Define: mottled, pluming.

PAGE 211

4. With pounding heart Hugh crawled along the height

Why "with pounding heart"?

15. Keen to possess once more the ancient gift.

Of Prometheus to man.
Define: doddering, burgeoning, tenuous.

PAGE 212

1. Arose, and made an altar of the place.

Fire worship is as old as the race. Hugh is the priest, the East Wind a religious novice who sings in the ceremonials, the night is the temple, and in response to the worship, "Conjuries of interwoven breath," the fire god appears in the burning wood.

5. The Wind became a chanting acolyte.

Why have an East Wind?

10. Once more the freightage of the fennel rod

Prometheus used a fennel rod to bring fire to mortals.

11. Dissolved the chilling pall of Jovian scorn.

Jove despised men and refused them fire.

13. The face apocalyptic, and the sword
14. The glory of the many-symboled Lord
17. Voiced with the sound of many waters,

All this is from Revelations, Chapter I.
Define: acolyte, epiphanic.

PAGE 213

11. Then set about to view an empty camp

12. As once before, etc.

See pages 29 and 30.

PAGE 214

1. Among the ash-heaps; and the lean dogs ran

2. And barked about him, for the love of man etc.

Some one has said that the dog was a candidate for humanity and just missed it.

8. For 'tis the little gifts of grudging Chance,

9. Well husbanded, make victors.

This is a principle of economy often illustrated.

18. Scarce more of marvel and the sense of might, etc.

Tennyson makes poetry out of a miraculous sword, Neihardt out of a man-made knife. One is romanticism, the other realism. Which is more poetic?

PAGE 215

1. Not having, but the measure of desire etc.

"A man's riches consist of what he can do without." Socrates taught this philosophy.

2. Who gaining more, seek most, etc.

Explain.

7. That twain wherewith Time put the brute to school,

Who was the "brute"? How "put to school"?

6. What gage of mastery in fire and tool! —

The control of fire was the first great step in civilization and someone has said that the invention of the bow and arrow wrought

greater changes in human life than any other invention. By enabling man to kill at a greater range it increased his supply of meat and so made it possible to live in larger groups.

PAGE 216

Why didn't Hugh roast the dog instead of boiling? Note details of preparation. Hugh ate the entire dog. Two starved Indian hunters have been known to eat the whole carcass of a deer at one sitting.

13. Hugh slept. And then — as divers, mounting, sunder etc.

A vivid expression of a common experience on waking from especially profound sleep.
Define: bulimic, gage.

PAGE 217

3. And was the friendlike fire a Jamie too? etc.

The natural return of a monomania.

12. The sting of that antiquity of pain

After a long rest, his former suffering seemed ancient.

14. That yielding victor, fleet in being slow

Always more space to be conquered, hence slow and certain to win over Hugh.

16. So readily the tentacles of sense, etc.

Thinkers are just beginning to realize something of the hypnotic power of habit and custom in the individual and in society. The loss of the accustomed may disintegrate the life. Our author shows keen understanding when he likens the effect upon Hugh of the loss of fire to that of the loss of a dear one by death. A moment ago he was here, vital, real. Now he is gone. How strange is the world without him!

PAGE 218

7. A yelping of the dogs among the bluffs, etc.

The one sound in the desolate night, the yelping of the dogs, starts a train of ideas. The power of abstraction has made man able to survive where less intelligent forms have perished. Flint can be used to skin a dog, so can steel, the two smitten together make fire, so Hugh found his "unlocked door to life."

22. Spilled on it from the smitten stone a shower
23. Of ruddy seed; and saw the mystic flower
24. That genders its own summer, bloom anew!

Explain the metaphor.
An absolutely new figure regarding fire.

PAGE 219

10. Set laggard singers snatching at the tune.

What "laggard singers"?

13. And, pitching voices to the timeless woe,

Life fundamentally sad.

14. Outwailed the lilting. So the Chorus sings etc.

In the Greek theater the Chorus sang after the actor had spoken, often taking an opposite tone. So Hugh's joyous song is drowned in the wailing of the dogs.

PAGE 220

8. He hobbled now along a withered rill etc.

Note the quiet of the autumn spell over the secluded place, and the onomatopœia indicating the falling of the plums and whispering leaves; also the crying of the lonesome dog that makes the stillness more intense and sad.

10. A cyclopean portal yawning sheer.

Explain.

25. Above the sunset like a stygian boat,

The boat of Charon on the Styx, the river of the underworld.

PAGE 221

1. The new moon bore the spectre of the old,

Explain.

3. The valley of the tortuous Cheyenne.

Locate the Cheyenne.

4. And ere the half moon sailed the night again, etc.

How long since Hugh left the forks of the Grand?

17. Grown Atlantean in the wrestler's craft.

Explain "Atlantean."
Read "The River and I," Chapter I, by the same author, to get his feeling for the Missouri.

The Return of the Ghost

PAGE 222

1. Not long Hugh let the lust of vengeance gnaw

Note that the first line of the division of the poem rhymes with the last line of the former. How often does this happen in the poem? This device keeps the mind on a stretch and so keeps interest alive. The same device is often used by the author in passing from one paragraph to the next.

5. I can not rest; for I am but the ghost etc.

The old obsession that he actually died by the Grand, though here used less seriously than in other places.

12. With such a blizzard of a face for me!

The epithet reveals how Hugh's gray "ruined face" impressed men.

13. For he went grayer like a poplar tree, etc.

The simile of the face of Glass in mentioning Jamie's treachery and the poplar tree shaken by the first wind of a storm is true to nature, for a poplar turns the gray side of its leaves when shaken.

Define: fend, kenneled.

PAGE 223

1. From where the year's last keelboat hove in view

The keelboat, shaped with keel and hence so called, from forty to sixty feet long, carrying as much as sixty tons and pulled by fifteen to twenty-five men, was used on the Missouri and other navigable rivers before the day of the steamboat.

10. Until the tipsy Bourgeois bawled for Glass

The head of a trading post in the fur trading period was called Bourgeois, a French word meaning tradesman.

12. The graybeard, sitting where the light was blear, etc.

The whole account of Hugh's telling of this great tragedy is of the highest excellence. We already know that Hugh is a story teller; we have seen him composing this very tale (page 58), and we know how his imagination sometimes carries him beyond the actual, as when he saw Jamie dead (page 60). The effect of his face, with its changing expressions suiting all the moods associated with love and betrayal, his chanting songlike tones, is shown in the muscular responses of the listeners and their shudders when the story ends. The supreme touch comes when Hugh tells of the slaying of Jamie as if already done.

19. And his the purpose that is art's, etc.

To centre attention on human experience at the crucial moment and so render it immortal.

20. Whereby men make a vintage of their hearts etc.

Turn sorrow into beauty. Is there comfort in a sad story well told?

PAGE 225

Select the lines on this page that convey a sense of monotony.

16. Past where the tawny Titan gulps the cup

Titan, the Missouri.

22. And there old times came mightily on Hugh, etc.

Do you believe Hugh capable now of killing Jamie?

24. Some troubled glory of that wind-tossed hair

Hugh's memory of Jamie is sad, not bitter.
Define: cutbank, wry, tawny.

PAGE 226

2. So haunted with the blue of Jamie's eyes, etc.

The blue is sad but not treacherous as once.

8. Past where the Cannon Ball and Heart come in

Locate the Cannon Ball and the Heart.

18. The chaining of the Titan. Drift ice ran.

The story of the freezing of the river is worth noting for its vividness, its alliterations and onomatopœia.

19. The wingéd hounds of Winter ceased to bay.

What were the "wingéd hounds"?

PAGE 227

5. To wait the far-off Heraclean thaw,

Heraclean — Hercules. What chained Titan did Hercules release?

12. His purpose called him at the Big Horn's mouth —

Locate the Big Horn. What purpose? Who was there?

18. And took the bare, foot-sounding solitude

Why "foot-sounding"?

22. He seemed indeed a fugitive from Death etc.

Another reference to Hugh's fancy that he had actually died. It gives added force to that fancy to make his frosted breath suggest a shroud.

24. Now the moon was young

Note the phase of the moon for later reference.

PAGE 228

6. With Spring's wild rage, the snow-born Titan girl, etc.

The Yellowstone is larger at the junction than is the Missouri. Hence the Missouri is the Titan girl rushing into the arms of her lover. But in the winter with snow covering the ice, "A winding sheet was on the marriage bed." Why "snow-born"?

15. Gray void seemed suddenly astir with wings etc.

Note onomatopœia in the lines indicating that snow begins to fall.

PAGE 229

1. The bluffs loomed eerie, and the scanty trees

Describe the appearance of the trees.

15. The tumbling snowflakes sighing all around,

What associations brought Hugh a dream of boyhood?

18. The Southwind in the touseled apple trees
19. And slumber flowing from their leafy gloom.

These lines are an intentional "literary echoing" of one of the most beautiful of the Sapphic fragments, — fragment 4 in Bergk's text

Define: penumbral, susurrant.

PAGE 230

The blizzard is a storm characteristic of the plains. It generally lasts three days, is terribly cold, and the whirling snow is blinding.

4. Black blindness grew white blindness

Indicating the slight difference between night and day.
Note in how few lines the poet pictures the passing of the day.

5. All being now seemed narrowed to a span, etc.

All else was shut from sight and to a degree from the mind.

PAGE 231

7. As with the waning day the great wind fell.

The sudden cessation of the wind at the close of the third day of the storm is characteristic, as is also the intense cold. Forty degrees below zero is not unusual, often even fifty degrees.

10. When, heifer-horned, the maiden moon lies down

A reference to the maiden Diana, goddess of the moon.
How long was Hugh on this journey?

PAGE 232

3. Yon sprawling shadow, pied with candle-glow etc.

Another of the gripping memory pictures. Can a man who dreams such a waking dream kill another, even one who has betrayed him, in cold blood?

21. Or was this but the fretted wraith of Hugh etc.

The feeling that he is a ghost comes to Hugh twice in this incident of finding the fort. His long journey, his weakened physical condition and his exhausted emotions combine to make life seem unreal.

PAGE 233

14. Joy filled a hush twixt heart-beats like a bird; etc.

Joy rather than anger comes first in his feeling about Jamie. That is significant.

PAGE 234

7. "My God! I saw the Old Man's ghost out there!"

Belief in ghosts was common among the trappers.

12–21. "Hugh strove to shout," etc.

For the last time we see Hugh with the feeling that he is dead.

PAGE 236

Are you surprised that Hugh does not kill Le Bon? Would you excuse the deed if he had?

JAMIE

PAGE 237

Locate the Country of the Crows (Absaroka), the Big Horn, the Powder, Fort Atkinson.

PAGE 238

16. Now up the Powder, etc.

Trace the journey on the map.
Locate the Laramie.

PAGE 239

2. The Niobrara races for the morn —

Locate the Niobrara. It is a very swift stream. Note the entire description of the coming of spring on the prairie. It is a lyric and includes a description of both late and early coming of spring.

3. Here at length was born
Upon the southern slopes the baby spring, etc.

A slow spring.

6. Not such as when announced by thunder-claps etc.

A description of a swiftly coming spring.

9. Clad splendidly as never Sheba's Queen,

Sheba's Queen — The Bible, 1st Kings.

15. And no root dreamed what Triumph-over-Death
16. Was nurtured now in some bleak Nazareth, etc.

The coming of spring suggests the resurrection.

19. And everywhere the Odic Presence dwelt.

"Odic": from "od," an arbitrary scientific term signifying the mysterious vital force in nature.

21. And when they reached the valley of the Snake,

Locate the Snake.

22. The Niobrara's ice began to break,

The next step in the coming of spring.

PAGE 240

4. The geese went over,

A sure sign that spring is almost come.

6. The little river of Keyapaha

Locate the Keyapaha.

10. To where the headlong Niobrara etc.

Locate the mouth of the Niobrara. A student in one of my classes once wrote an interesting essay telling how her father's farm had been swept away by the rushing of the Niobrara into the Missouri at the spring flood. At such times the smaller river hurls the Missouri as much as a mile beyond its normal course.

13. A giant staggered by a pigmy's sling.

What Bible story is here referred to?

18. There all the vernal wonder-work was done: etc.

From here on select the color words that give the picture of the progress of spring. Another lyric.

PAGE 241

14. Of wizard-timber and of wonder stuff etc.

Are day dreams built of "wizard timber and of wonder-stuff"? Note the alliteration.

PAGE 242

1. Into the North, a devil-ridden man.

The first picture of Jamie since he deserted Hugh. Will it arouse Hugh's pity?

13. Up the long watery stairway to the Horn,

What is the "watery stairway to the Horn"? Horn — Big Horn River.

14. And the year was shorn etc.

How long is it since the story opened?
Note the entire description of the coming of autumn.

19. That withered in the endless martyrdom

Why "martyrdom"?

20. The scarlet quickened on the plum etc.

Note the steps of the coming of autumn at the Heart, among the Mandans, at the Yellowstone, the Powder.

PAGE 243

1. Was spattered with the blood of Summer slain.

A remarkable figure.

8. Aye, one who seemed to stare upon a ghost etc.

A second picture of Jamie's suffering.

14. And to forgive and to forget were sweet: etc.

There will be no murder; our interest now is that the men may meet and in the manner of reconciliation.

15. 'Tis for its nurse etc.

Explain. Is this not true?

20. But at the crossing of the Rosebud's mouth

Locate the Rosebud.

PAGE 244

3. Alas, the journey back to yesterwhiles! etc.

There is no going back to the old days.

13. He came with those to where the Poplar joins etc.

Locate the Poplar.

22. From Mississippi to the Great Divide

Locate the Great Divide.

PAGE 245

5. Upon Milk River valley,

Locate Milk River.

7. Above the Piegan lodges,

Piegans — one of the principal divisions of the Blackfoot tribe of Indians. Locate the Piegan village.

PAGE 246

7. Lest on the sunset trail slow feet should err.

What is the "sunset trail"?

16. You saw no Black Robe?

Black Robe, priest, so-called by all Indians.

18. "Heaped snow — sharp stars — a kiote on the rise."

The answer is true to the laconic Indian speech, but it is beautiful.

PAGE 250

2. By their own weakness are the feeble sped; etc.

Three paradoxes — "He that loseth his life shall find it."

PAGE 251

The vision of Hugh as seen by Jamie corresponds to the description of Hugh on pages 59 and 60. May we say that Jamie may indeed have seen Hugh? The Society for Psychic Research records such phenomena.

15. O, Father, I had paid too much for breath!

For what will a man give his life? What higher values than life are there? It is Satan who says in Job, "All that a man hath will he give for his life."

Show that the principle of Katharsis is illustrated in this poem.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

"The River and I," Neihardt (G. P. Putnam's Sons).

"The Splendid Wayfaring," *Ibid.* (The Macmillan Company, New York).

"The Song of Hugh Glass," *Ibid.* (*Ibid.*).

"John G. Neihardt — Man and Poet," House (F. H. Jones & Co., Wayne, Nebraska).

The MODERN READERS' SERIES

The MODERN READERS' SERIES

ASHLEY H. THORNDIKE, *General Editor*

THE MODERN READERS' SERIES will include a wide range of English and American literature and, to a lesser degree, the literature of other nations through translation. In addition to books of recognized popularity and appeal, the series will include works, heretofore not easily accessible, of importance and value to serious readers and students. Each book is edited with an introduction by an authority in the field of literature in which the book belongs.

Distinction has been sought not alone through care in the choice of titles and the quality of the editing but through beauty and strength of mechanical form as well. Much thought and care have been expended on typography, paper, binding, illustrations, and decoration. In general the titles in the series are available in two styles: one, a rich half-leather binding at $1.25; the other, a handsome durable binding of blue cloth designed particularly for college and school use for $.80. The price of each edition is extremely low considering the quality maintained.

At present, in addition to the volumes already published, some fifty volumes are in process of preparation. A few books whose length might be forbidding to some readers have been abridged by shortening or eliminating over-long descriptive passages and occasional unimportant digressions from the main narrative. Such abridgments are indicated by [ab] after the title.

The

MODERN READERS' SERIES

AESOP'S FABLES: Edited by Jacobs (Leather only)
ALCOTT: *Little Women*
ALLEN: *A Kentucky Cardinal and Aftermath*
ARNOLD: *Culture and Anarchy*
BARKER: *Forty-Minute Plays from Shakespeare.* (Cloth only)
BORROW: *Lavengro*
BRONTE: *Jane Eyre*
BROWNING: *Selected Poems*
BURNS: *Selected Poems*
*BUTLER: *The Way of All Flesh*
BYRON: *Don Juan*
CARLYLE: *Past and Present*
Sartor Resartus
CERVANTES: *Don Quixote* (ab)
COLERIDGE: *Biographia Literaria*
CONGREVE: *Comedies*
COOPER: *The Last of the Mohicans*
The Pathfinder (ab)
DANA: *Two Years Before the Mast*
DARWIN: *Origin of Species*
DICKENS: *Tale of Two Cities*
David Copperfield°
DOSTOEVSKY: *Crime and Punishment*
DUMAS: *The Three Musketeers* (ab)
*ELIOT: *Middlemarch*
EMERSON: *Essays*
FRANKLIN: *Autobiography*
*GARLAND: *Son of the Middle Border.* (Cloth only)
HAWTHORNE: *Scarlet Letter*
HAZLITT: *Essays*
IBSEN: *Plays*
*JAMES: *Daisy Miller*
KEATS: *Complete Poems*
LAMB: *Essays of Elia*
*LONDON: *The Call of the Wild*
MACAULAY: *Historical Essays*
*MEREDITH: *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*
MILL: *On Liberty and Other Essays*
MILTON: *Aeropagitica and Other Prose Writings*
NEIHARDT: *Song of the Three Friends and Song of Hugh Glass*
*PATER: *Marius the Epicurean*
POLO: *Travels of Marco Polo*
PORTER: *Scottish Chiefs*°
RIIS: *The Making of an American.* (Cloth only)
SCOTT: *Heart of Midlothian*°
Ivanhoe. (ab)
SHERIDAN: *Plays*
SMITH: *Short Plays by Representative Authors.* (Cloth only)
STOWE: *Uncle Tom's Cabin*
SWIFT: *Gulliver's Travels*
*TENNYSON: *Idylls of the King*
THACKERAY: *Henry Esmond*
Vanity Fair°
TROLLOPE: *Barchester Towers*
TWAIN: *Innocents Abroad*
WATTS: *Nathan Burke.* (Cloth only)
WHITE: *A Certain Rich Man*
WILKINSON: *Contemporary Poetry*
WISTER: *Lady Baltimore.* (Cloth only)
WORDSWORTH: *Poems*

* Cannot be sold in British Dominions.

° (ab. cloth only)